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Christopher Prior

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Constructing imperial mindsets: Race  
and development in Britain's interwar  
African colonial administration

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## **Abstract**

Very few have attempted to discuss interwar British colonial officials' intellectual interactions with the metropole in the early twentieth century. And yet such interactions are key if we are to really understand the way administrators understood race, imperial power and development. Where the ideas of colonial officials in interwar Africa have been examined, academics tend to coalesce around one of two arguments. Some believe that the British were cautious and conservative, which is said to account for the rise of the doctrine of 'indirect rule' and an aversion to the introduction of educational provision to the continent. Others, predominantly postcolonialists writing in the last twenty years or so, have argued that the British in Africa were ambiguous as to what their role was, because, they were attached to both ideas of the 'civilizing mission' and the 'noble savage.'

In contrast to the first line of thinking, the British were in fact consistently interventionist, due to a moral universalism, a belief in the 'good' of the British, and an excited advocacy of the act of change. In contrast to the second line of thinking, the British genuinely felt that they were effecting coherent programmes of political, economic and social infrastructural development. The enthusiasm for change and a perception of Africa as robust and adaptable more than countered any sense of loss at the passing of a pre-colonial Africa that was usually depicted



in negative terms, especially when it was felt that what was good about 'traditional' African society could be preserved by indirect rule.

The source of British confidence lay to a significant extent in the constant engagement of colonial officials with metropolitan ideas. Elite administrators, anthropologists and other commentators of the day all sanctioned the act of change. British conceptions of racial categories and imperial strength conjoined in such a way that officials felt that they were effecting coherent plans which blended both 'reform' and 'stasis' because both race and empire were felt considerably more robust than retrospective depictions of early-twentieth century fears over the validity of the 'civilizing mission' have deemed.

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## **Abbreviations**

CAB – Cabinet Office Papers, Public Records Office, London

CO – Colonial Office Papers, Public Records Office, London

FW – Frederic Whyte Papers, Newcastle University Library

RCMS – Royal Commonwealth Collections, Cambridge University Library

RHO – Rhodes House, Oxford University

RUL – Reading University Library

SAD – Sudan Archive, Durham University

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# Introduction

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Against strident critics of imperialism in Africa such as Basil Davidson,<sup>1</sup> certain popular historians, such as self-confessed Thatcherite Niall Ferguson, have argued that the British Empire did much that was good for the world. For Ferguson, it brought positives such as stability, democracy and capitalism to areas that had predominantly known only the negatives of instability, despotism and primitive economic systems. These systems took a long time to implement, often meeting with resistance, and the British occasionally failed to live up to their own ideals. However, Ferguson continues, imperial policy as it was implemented was more or less a historical 'good thing'.<sup>2</sup> For any evaluation of the validity or otherwise of such contentious statements, an examination of the mentalities of those involved in British imperial activity is necessary. After all, how can the extent to which the British did or did not live up to their own ideals be determined if we are unaware of the nature of such ideals?

And yet such mentalities are examined in less detail than other facets of empire. Most historians merely make vague declarations as to the existence of a British faith in some sort of hegemonic gradualist 'civilizing mission' among both metropolitan commentators and colonial officials. While it would be wrong to criticise biographies of elite colonial

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<sup>1</sup> B. Davidson, *The black man's burden: Africa and the curse of the nation-state* (London, 1992), passim, for example pp.12, 42, 47, 298

<sup>2</sup> N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain made the modern world* (2003; London, 2004), passim, especially pp.365-73



administrators for concentrating on the individuals at hand, they are not useful for giving an overview of wider shifts in policy and ideals.<sup>3</sup> Clive Dewey's study of the Indian Civil Service is a rare examination of the structural relationships between metropolitan culture and colonial officials' mentalities in the early twentieth century. However, this work looks at two men, Frank Lugard Brayne and Malcolm Darling, who were not rank and file officials. After all, Darling eventually received a knighthood, while Brayne's uncle was the pre-eminent African administrator Lord (Frederick) Lugard.<sup>4</sup> Benjamin Lampert's recent MSc thesis is a neat preliminary examination of the intellectual mindset of colonial officials working in Nigeria, but this only focuses on a small number of men who served predominantly between 1945 and independence in 1960.<sup>5</sup> Other than this, those works that deal with the colonial official in Africa, while undoubtedly useful, have predominantly concentrated upon specifics, for example J. A. Mangan's work on the masculine, sporting identities borne out of the public school system.<sup>6</sup> While Anthony Kirk-Greene has made some tentative steps towards providing a wider context of the relationship between the colonial official's intellectual background and the beliefs he held once in Africa, this has yet to be examined in anything approaching a systematic manner.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that officials either whole-heartedly swallowed or rejected all that the interwar metropole offered to them. Here Dewey's work raises a pertinent point that can be applied to the African situation. He argues that Brayne and Darling were 'prisoners of the values they absorbed in their youth', remaining doctrinaires – advocates of

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<sup>3</sup> For example, R. E. Wraith, *Guggisberg* (London, 1967); M. Perham, *Lugard: The years of adventure, 1858-1898* (London, 1956); Perham, *Lugard: The years of authority, 1898-1945* (London, 1960)

<sup>4</sup> C. Dewey, *Anglo-Indian attitudes: The mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1993)

<sup>5</sup> B. E. N. Lampert, "So we used to do": *British colonial civil servants in Nigeria 1921-1968* (University of Bristol MSc, 2002)

<sup>6</sup> J. A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian public school: The emergence and consolidation of an educational ideology* (1981; London, 2000), pp.122-40; Mangan, 'The education of an elite imperial administration: The Sudan Political Service and the British public school system', in *International journal of African historical studies* 15 (1982), pp.671-99; Mangan, *The games ethic and imperialism: Aspects of the diffusion of an ideal* (1986; London, 1998); Mangan, 'Prologue', in (ed.), *The cultural bond: Sport, empire, society*, Mangan (ed.), (London, 1992), pp.1-10

<sup>7</sup> A. H. M. Kirk-Greene, 'The Sudan Political Service: A profile in the sociology of imperialism', in *International journal of African historical studies* 15 (1982), pp.21-48

'the Gospel of Uplift' and 'the Cult of Friendship' respectively – long after they had arrived in the Asian subcontinent.<sup>8</sup> With regards to colonial officials in Africa, what degree did metropolitan perceptions of imperial aims and of race inform their daily lives, both in the initial stages of their time in the continent as they attempted to make sense of that which was new, and once they had settled into more routinised schedules of governance? In other words, did displacement from the metropole lead to British assumptions about empire being weakened or strengthened?

Furthermore, if there were differences between metropolitan and official perceptions of Africa – where it was, where it was going, and where it was felt it should be going – did such differences precipitate the emergence of a distinctly colonial outlook? Respected biologist Julian Huxley noted that even the European who visited Africa only briefly found it difficult to escape a certain intellectual climate which 'enfolds him, and because almost everyone he meets tacitly makes the same general assumptions, he very often falls into the current way of thinking.'<sup>9</sup> Was this observation a product of Huxley's experiences, or a convenient journalistic tag that papered over nuance to fit an ulterior motive?

This study will concentrate predominantly on those colonial officials who worked in Nigeria and the Gold Coast in West Africa, and the Sudan and Tanganyika in the east. Other areas such as North and South Rhodesia, Kenya, Gambia and Sierra Leone will also be examined, but in less detail. The study will predominantly focus upon administrative officials, those men who had to fulfil a hotchpotch of duties, but who were mainly concerned with maintaining law and order and overseeing the running of local governmental institutions such as courts and 'tribal' councils, although others such as forestry officials and auditors will also be examined along the way. The timeframe is the interwar years. With a few exceptions,<sup>10</sup> this period has been given relatively short shrift in imperial cultural history. It has not been entirely neglected, but the years between c.1880 and 1914, and after 1945

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<sup>8</sup> Dewey, *Anglo-Indian attitudes*, passim, especially pp.19-38, 103-85; quotation at p.12

<sup>9</sup> J. Huxley, 'Racial chess', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 69 (1930), p.538

<sup>10</sup> Such as B. Bush, *Imperialism, race and resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London, 1999)



attract more scholarly attention.<sup>11</sup> After all, both of these periods were ones in which exciting or 'big' things happened. On the one hand, there was the 'scramble' for Africa, the Boer War and the 'boys' own' sense of imperial adventure and, on the other, there was World War Two and its aftermath, the Suez crisis, the 'winds of change' and the move towards decolonization.

However, before any analysis of the intellectual world of interwar officials can take place, it is first necessary to appraise the sort of person to be concentrated upon. The type that went out to Africa as rank and file officials in the interwar period tended to be from a certain sort of background. They were for the most part middle- and upper-middle class in origin. They were rarely aristocrats, (who tended to work in India and the Dominions) and, while there were some with such a background among the elite African ranks, such as Sir Hugh Clifford, who was the grandson of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lord Clifford, the majority of notable proconsuls, such as Lord Lugard, Reginald Wingate and Donald Cameron were from the middle classes.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, most administrators were from a civilian background; particularly after 1918, those army officials who continued serving in Africa after having played a part in the 'pacification' of the continent in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries became increasingly scarce.<sup>13</sup> The majority had also been to university;<sup>14</sup> self-educated men such as Cameron were rare.

The picture usually constructed by today's historian is of an interwar Britain dragged down by crisis after crisis, of a land weary after the Great War, battered by the General Strike of 1926 and concomitant fears of communist subversives at work undermining the fabric of British society, by the Wall Street crash and ensuing depression, and by a crisis of faith in civilization precipitated by the gradual decline in geopolitical stability ushered in by the rise

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<sup>11</sup> This has long been the case; D. Meredith, 'The British government and colonial economic policy, 1919-39', in *Economic history review* 28 (1975), p.484

<sup>12</sup> D. Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (New Haven, 1990), pp.421-2, 559, 605. In this they were similar to their pre-1914 predecessors; L. H. Gann and P. Duignan, *The rulers of British Africa 1870-1914* (London, 1978), p.43

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, M. W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898-1934* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.271-2

<sup>14</sup> Numerous memoirs and other private papers testify to this university education, with the majority either attending Oxford or Cambridge; for one of only many, see J. Kenrick, memoirs, SAD 815/4/1, 3; interview with Philip Bowcock, 9 September 2006; Kirk-Greene, 'The Sudan Political Service', *passim*

of the European dictators. However, by distilling such events into a historical narrative that tends to favour what we retrospectively deem to have had the greatest impact on the world, we run the risk of failing to appreciate how those at the time envisaged what they were going through. Instead, the official-producing classes were confident of their own economic ability, and of Britain's as a whole. They judged its performance favourably against a continental Europe that both failed to readjust to post-conflict life as effectively as Britain did, and that was, alongside the United States, hit considerably harder by the destabilisation that took place in the aftermath of the 1929 crash. A positive appraisal of the nature, strength and value of Britain meant that, in contrast to what some have written, the British were happy to export their own ideas about civilization to other parts of the world.

As a brief aside, it is worth discussing the nature of the sources to be examined in the first half of the study. Works of non-fiction, and political and social commentaries in particular, feature heavily. Certain sources are easy to identify as being of value to the present study. Most colonial officials were conservative, Conservative, or both, from the elites such as Sir William Gowers, Governor of Uganda in the late 'twenties and early 'thirties,<sup>15</sup> down to the 'men on the spot' such as Geoffrey Popplewell and William Tripe in Tanganyika and Gawain Bell in the Sudan.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the centrist and right-wing worlds of the middle- and upper-middle classes will receive the most attention here. Some journals made no attempts to hide the fact that they were primarily aimed at this 'informed' section of society.<sup>17</sup> Of the utmost significance for the colonial official was *The Times*. Whilst other papers, (such as *The Observer*, then a conservative publication), were read, it was *The Times* that was returned to repeatedly, and it is therefore the paper that will be examined in the most detail. With the exception of

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<sup>15</sup> W. F. Gowers to Orsmby-Gore, 2 May 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1150/85-6; see also A. C. Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 21 April 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(2)/(7)/4

<sup>16</sup> G. D. Popplewell, 'Random recollections of a District Commissioner', RHO Mss.Afr.s.2156/1; see also M. V. Hoyle to mother, 11 October 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.718(1); W. B. Tripe, 'Anger in Africa', RHO Mss.Afr.s.868(4); G. W. Bell to parents, 6 November 1933, SAD 697/11/4

<sup>17</sup> E. Smyth, 'Maurice Baring as novelist', in *The quarterly review* 530 (1936), p.237. For the conservative credentials of writers of such periodicals see, with regards to *The quarterly review*, for example, 'The Conservative task', in *The quarterly review* 500 (1929), pp.380-99; 'Some recent books', in *The quarterly review* 532 (1937), p.177; H. Molson, 'The English way of life', in *The quarterly review* 541 (1939), p.156

the leftist *Manchester Guardian*, local papers were of no real significance. In the era of the rise of the 'press barons' such as Northcliffe, the importance of local papers as sites of national comment fell dramatically. For example, with the exception of the north east of England, the political and economic strength of the Liberal provincial papers run by the Rowntree family fell noticeably over the period.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, editorials and foreign news in local papers were often copied from *The Times* and the other nationals, the provincials usually lacking the resources to research anything other than local issues for themselves. In addition to the national press, less ephemeral printed sources will be examined, including the type of texts the young would-be colonial officials studied while at university, as well as popular books on the nature of race and civilization, and a range of other works of printed fiction and non-fiction.

What of the way in which texts can or cannot be interpreted by historians? One of the most vital results of postmodernist study over the past few decades has been a focus upon the multiple ways in which a text can be read, a process that undermines the beliefs of traditional historians such as Geoffrey Elton that history was a fully realisable search for objective historical 'facts'.<sup>19</sup> That texts may be read in different ways has, however, led to some weird and wonderful interpretations. For instance, M. Daphne Kutzer has argued that, in A. A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, Tigger represents India while Pooh's love of honey is indicative of imperial greed in Africa.<sup>20</sup>

But, in the face of such nonsense masquerading as literary interpretation, not all is lost for the historian attempting to understand how people comprehended texts in the past. As Terry Eagleton has argued, a work's reception

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<sup>18</sup> P. Gliddon, 'The political importance of provincial newspapers, 1903-1945: The Rowntrees and the Liberal Press', in *Twentieth century British history* 14 (2003), pp.24-42

<sup>19</sup> G. R. Elton, *The practice of history* (London, 1967). The most famous discussion of this matter is still E. H. Carr, *What is history?* (1961; London, 1990); see also R. J. Evans, *In defence of history* (London, 1997)

<sup>20</sup> M. D. Kutzer, *Empire's children: Empire and imperialism in classic British children's books* (New York, 2000), pp.100-1; see also M. Hendricks, "'Obscured by dreams": Race, empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*', in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996), p.58

is a constitutive dimension of the work itself... there is nothing divinely given or immutably fixed about language... But interpreting these marks [printed words] is a constrained affair, because the marks are often used by people in their social practices of communication in certain ways... [while] the reader will bring to the work certain 'pre-understandings', a dim context of beliefs and expectations within which the work's various features will be assessed.<sup>21</sup>

Texts are social, thus reinforcing each other in a circular fashion. Popular writers usually provide a degree of escapism for their readers. However, in order that the scenarios that their protagonists find themselves in are believable to an audience, authors must ensure that their narratives are embedded in social axioms. The adventurer must react in a believable way, using realistic knowledge and acting to foil an enemy's plans; in addition, if he or she is a true hero, they will act in a manner that upholds those characteristics felt by their audience to be important and valid. However intelligent a detective is, they must be able to explain their findings via deductions that the other characters and, by extension, the reader, can believe when the final denouement in the drawing room takes place. In this way, fiction provides an invaluable source of information for the historian.

Where a postcolonialist in the present might today seek to collapse any claims as to the validity of the social circularity of texts, this was not the case in an interwar world where all texts were underpinned by the same assumptions or, at the very least, deviated from one another to a relatively small degree. So, we can at least be reasonably confident, if not definite, as to the way in which the public received fiction in the interwar period, especially when a wide range of texts are examined, and when this examination is aided by an understanding of the way in which the critics of the time received these texts. Both historians and literary critics frequently, and curiously, neglect any analysis of critical responses to cultural works. Instead, such scholars frequently map their own reactions to a text onto that text's contemporaries, as will be shown in chapters one and two.

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<sup>21</sup> T. Eagleton, *Literary theory: An introduction* (1983; Oxford, 1996), pp.67, 72, 75

An understanding of the way works of literature were understood is eased by the fact that the majority of these works were relatively simplistic in nature. Early modernist and avant-garde works such as *Ulysses* have become classics, partly because they contain tensions that militate against the drawing of firm conclusions. They are sites of intrigue for the modern scholar. By contrast, the popular works of the time usually set no store by ambiguity. They were not all as overtly proselytising in manner as the later works of H. G. Wells, which were frequently undisguised endorsements of his own version of a future utopia.<sup>22</sup> Instead, in the majority of works, a simple story was told. They usually contained a moral, which was either made explicit, or to be inferred by who had 'won' and who had 'lost' by the end of the story. Occasional factors in a work that ran against the smooth grain of the narrative did not undermine the moral validity of the whole in the eyes of the reader, but merely reminded him or her that no social system or act was perfect and totally without negative repercussion.

Returning to the structure of the present study, once chapter one has outlined the paradigmatic 'positive' mentality, chapter two will examine interwar metropolitan ideas about race and Africa. In non-fictional works, the British felt that understanding racial characteristics was a necessary thing because it helped officials delineate how Britain should frame its policies with regard to Africa and the rest of the world. While cultural factors were felt to play a part in shaping humanity, throughout the interwar period race did not cease to be the pre-eminent determinant of the two.

It might seem as though much of this is a rehash of arguments made elsewhere. Yet a reappraisal of such attitudes is in fact long overdue. This is for three reasons. Firstly, that attempts at trying to understand interwar cultural products usually entail an analysis of works that academics find interesting, rather than of those that the interwar middle classes found interesting. There has been no vaguely systematic study of this latter body of work. Secondly, certain revisionists have attempted – incorrectly, it will be argued – to wrest some authors away from the tarring brushes marked 'imperialist' and 'racist'. And, thirdly, the sociological implications of literature for wider understandings of empire have yet to be fully

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<sup>22</sup> H. G. Wells, *Men like gods* (London, 1923); Wells, *The croquet player* (1936; Nottingham, 1998)

exploited with regards to the interwar period. After all, the 'gaps' in a fictional narrative, the unspoken implications of characters' actions, shed light on the values assumed as commonplace by the authorial voice. Fiction has been described as a means of providing a society with a way of entering into a discourse that can never be verbalised publicly. It is, according to this line of thinking, a way of discussing fears and looking at the underbelly of Western 'civility' without needing to air one's fascination with failure and societal disintegration aloud.<sup>23</sup> To return to Conrad once again, *Heart of darkness* is taken by some as indicative of an omnipresent early-twentieth century fear as to the instability of racial borders and thus also as to the efficacy of the civilizing mission. After all, if Kurtz could succumb to the horror, surely the 'dark continent' could pose a risk to any man who dared take it on? But in reality, such ideas were emphatically rejected out of hand. A metropolitan surety of action permeated interwar fiction, thus joining non-fiction in asserting feelings of confidence over instability, and a definite sense that problems posed by the modern world could be solved by Britain. The ending was always a 'happy' one; those who sought to subvert British aims in Africa were defeated, because the British had 'right' on their side.

A perpetuated faith in the empire and in the validity of certain established racial ideas conjoined to inform the manner in which Africa, and Britain's role in Africa, was envisaged. chapter three will focus upon this matter, highlighting the public output of those commentators on the British in Africa who drew the greatest attention from the sectors of society that provided the majority of colonial officials. Studies by prominent imperial elites, such as Lord Lugard, are considered alongside those specialists deemed pre-eminent by their peers, such as Margery Perham, as well as academics in the fields of geography, theology and missionary work, and anthropology. Despite some cultural overlap, each of these groups of people had distinctive orbits, their own journals and forums; therefore the ideas present in these will be considered alongside the way such ideas found acceptance or rejection in newspapers and the journalistic reviews. Some modern scholars, such as David Cannadine,

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<sup>23</sup> A. Lively, *Masks: Blackness, race and the imagination* (1998; London, 1999), p.127

see the policies of the British in Africa as a means of preserving the status quo at all costs.<sup>24</sup> However, the works examined in chapter three advocated reform. They aimed to 'rescue' Africa from itself. British policies were not seen as a way of casing Africa in amber but, instead, as the best way of facilitating change.

In contrast to the 'Cannadine school', certain postcolonialists have argued that all colonial relationships were embedded in a sense of indeterminacy and ambiguity. For instance, Laura Tabili has argued that there existed a contradiction in twentieth-century imperialism between 'maintaining the subordination and stratification that made imperialism profitable and the political necessity of a liberal and progressive public face.'<sup>25</sup> But some have gone further than this depiction of a disjuncture between British words and British actions, seeing tensions acting within both of these in their own rights. The crux of Homi Bhabha's argument is that a colonizing power advocates a 'colonial mimicry', that is, it wants those it ruled over to become a 'reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.'<sup>26</sup> Such mimicry is 'constructed around an *ambivalence*'; the 'authority of that mode of colonial discourse... is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal'.<sup>27</sup> In other words, for Bhabha, empire is constantly grounded in ambiguity. The British wished for the 'Other' to be both altered, in keeping with notions of the 'civilising mission', and, at the same time, to remain different, in order that a space between 'them' and 'us' perpetuated British claims to the role of colonizer. Similarly, Frederick Cooper has argued that metropolitan attempts to find 'a balance between the poles of incorporation... and differentiation' was an unstable process.<sup>28</sup> Certain gender historians have taken to this theme too. Christopher Lane believes that there was a constant uncertainty about the benefits of colonial rule among the British middle classes because a 'conflict between desire and mastery prevailed on... Britain's

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<sup>24</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire* (2001; London, 2002), pp.139-40

<sup>25</sup> L. Tabili, 'The construction of racial difference in twentieth century Britain: The Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order, 1925', in *Journal of British studies* 33 (1994), p.96

<sup>26</sup> H. K. Bhabha, *The location of culture* (London, 1994), p.86; italics in original.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.; italics in original.

<sup>28</sup> F. Cooper, *Colonialism in question: Theory, knowledge, history* (London, 2005), p.154

“colonial impulse to power”, a desire that was born of conscious or unconscious homosexual interracial yearning.<sup>29</sup>

That the British were supposedly inconsistent and that they felt themselves to have been inconsistent are often pointed out side by side by postcolonialists as a means of strengthening their arguments. The present work does not deny that all imperial activities may, in reality, have been grounded in indeterminacy. Such an evaluation is beyond the present study's scope. However, this is not to say that the British of the interwar years believed this. Interwar commentaries, which inevitably advocated 'indirect rule', are notable for their faith in the value and internal consistency of British developmental policies. Where Bhabha et al believe there to have been indeterminacy, for the interwar metropole there were fixed reference points that demarcated the degree to which the 'Other' was to become more like the 'Self', and to which it was to remain different. A belief in racial characteristics made such a partial difference natural, a belief in not going against the racial 'grain' made it desirable. Morality indicated where changes were felt necessary, culture indicated where differences were necessary. Moral relativism was marginalised as a social concept, but cultural relativism was not, and this simple point allowed for a stable theoretical model as to Africa's future to develop in the mind of the imperial expert. Where tensions within policies, and between policy and reality, were noted, imperial confidence prevented the widespread emergence of tension as an overriding precept. Flaws were seen as necessary teething troubles to be overcome, bumps along the road of the great African experiment in change. It was only as metropolitan faith in the stability of the West began to dissipate, when it became increasingly apparent that Britain and her allies were headed for yet another global conflict, that this theoretical stability started to be questioned by anything other than a minority. Until then, a British confidence prevailed.

The British did not worry that by developing Africa they might be undermining the role of the imperialist there. For those who believed there was a racial limit to the extent that the African was capable of developing, there was obviously no fear as to the British altering

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<sup>29</sup> C. Lane, *The ruling passion: British colonial allegory and the paradox of homosexual desire* (Durham, NC, 1995), p.15



Africa to the point that it would no longer be part of the empire, for this day could not come. Those who envisioned Africa as one day being made up of self-governing nations believed that such nations would follow the model of the white dominions and remain tied to Britain both economically and by bonds of sentiment and kinship. Irrespective of their conception of Africa's future, each model allowed for development to take place, safe from any nagging fears as to the eventual ramifications of a transfer of domestic responsibility to the African.

With the nature of metropolitan opinions delineated, attention can then be paid to colonial officials in the second half of the study. Something needs to be said briefly about the nature of the sources to be used here. These are mainly colonial officials' letters home, their diaries, (both private journals and those official records that were sent off to governmental superiors), and the reports that they filed at the end of each year or upon their leaving an administrative region. The point is frequently made that these types of sources might distort or even falsify events.<sup>30</sup> Officials were keen to present their actions in a particular way, and the charge could be levelled that they espoused developmental ideas in a public manner because they felt socially obliged to, when their true beliefs, which they kept personal, were very different. Similarly, officials might have appeared more positive on the page than in reality, because they were keen to show to others that they were 'in charge' for fear that others might think less of them if they admitted defeat or displayed weakness on a particular issue.

However, while the problem of fully understanding someone from their writings can never be totally surmounted, a systematic reading of as many diaries and letters that were produced by a single person as is possible usually enables the historian to notice cracks in potential façades. At any rate, with regards to any official putting a positive 'spin' on events in their semi-official diaries, the extent to which this would have ever facilitated a serious rupture between an official's perception of reality and any written depiction of this perception is severely limited. This is because it was highly likely that any serious problems an official withheld from his superior would have been discovered eventually, not least because of the frequent tours of inspection that colonial elites made. There is also the

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<sup>30</sup> For example, see K. E. Kuhn-Osius, 'Making loose ends meet: Private journals in the public realm', in *German quarterly* 54 (1981), p.167

testimony of ex-colonial officials to consider, that a spirit of brutal honesty existed throughout most of the services in operation in Africa.<sup>31</sup> Certainly, as is argued below, colonial officials let their grievances be known, and some did not hold back from criticising those they felt were impeding their plans for change in Africa.

In chapter four it is necessary to analyse colonial officials' ideas about race and empire. In their thinking, the officials were similar to those living in Britain as a direct result of their sustained intellectual interaction with metropolitan ideas. This is a direct challenge to the claim, made most recently by John Cell, that what was of key importance in the shaping of imperial mentalities was in fact the experiences colonial officials had in Africa, rather than the years of preconceptions they had accrued prior to leaving Britain and which continued to be fed by the popular press, novels and the like.<sup>32</sup> Officials felt that race and empire were stable entities and, chapter five will argue, these were combined to engender the same sorts of beliefs about imperial development as expounded by metropolitan commentators. It was usually felt that change might come as a result of indirect rule. A commitment to the use of chiefs was not seen primarily as a means of sealing off the African from the influence of the wider world. A range of colonial officials with differing intellectual preoccupations and outlooks will be examined. Despite such differences in certain regards, this range of officials nevertheless shared the same overriding sense of the way Africa should be changed. In this, colonial officials' ideas were underpinned by a metropolitan-influenced confidence. They felt sure of their ability, given the time and resources, to change Africa as they best saw fit. Additionally, Africa was read as a place where change was not only necessary, but which would also restore a romantic element to the continent. Therefore, the postcolonialist belief that colonial officials' mindsets suffered from a dichotomization between an attachment to both a romantic stasis and a non-romantic change is inaccurate, which partly accounts for the relative lack of ambivalence that officials felt at this time.

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<sup>31</sup> Interview with Bowcock, 9 September 2006

<sup>32</sup> J. W. Cell, 'Colonial rule', in *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV - The twentieth century*, J. M. Brown and W. R. Louis (eds.), (Oxford, 1999), p.233

In chapter five, an analysis of the interplay of differing intellectual influences in forming ideas about development readily lends itself to a case study approach. This raises questions about whether an analysis of a relatively small number of colonial officials might in any way be said to be authoritative. The difficulty of establishing whether such men were indicative of wider trends is exacerbated by the fact that some officials who wrote of Africa in their journals and letters home did not dwell upon the role of the British in the continent in any extensive detail. In other words, they lacked a grand imperial strategy.<sup>33</sup> The memoirs and diaries of Hugh Elliott, who worked in Nigeria, reveal a man too busy with tax collection, locust catching and the like to conceive of anything beyond the next immediate task in hand.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, despite his having started out in Tanganyika in 1931, Francis Dowsett seems to have only fully considered the administrative officer's role within the bigger picture when he was asked to give a talk at a girls' school in 1955.<sup>35</sup> Others did not use their diaries to reflect on change in Africa at all.<sup>36</sup> Some did not view the letter or the journal as the place to ruminate on issues in detail, to join the dots of policy together. This is particularly unsurprising in the case of letters home; the presence of gossip and more light-hearted matter in these could have been a means of reassuring loved ones that all was alright.

However, despite the limitations that the source material places upon the certainty of any conclusions, the ensuing analysis of some 120 or so officials goes some way towards building up a preliminary picture of colonial mentalities. After all, even those who dwelt little on where Africa should be headed nevertheless exhibited key ideas that indicate they fit neatly into the bigger puzzle that can be constructed from a more systematic analysis of a few officials. Imperial confidence and lack of ambivalence seems to have prevailed beyond these case studies.

This is not, however, to go as far as to suggest that no colonial officials perceived Britain's role as one embedded in contradiction. Some were constantly racked by conflict as to what

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<sup>33</sup> Lampert, *"So we used to do"*, pp.15-6

<sup>34</sup> H. P. Elliott, 'Reminiscences of colonial administrative service in Nigeria, 1934-67', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1838, p.1; Elliott, diaries for 1935-6, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1336

<sup>35</sup> F. Dowsett, letter to mother, 13 February 1955, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/547

<sup>36</sup> In this they were like Sir John Maxwell, twice Acting Governor of the Gold Coast; for example, see J. Maxwell, diaries, 18 March 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2133(4)/4/49

their role and that of the empire should be. These people will receive attention in chapter six. Their conflicts were those of a certain type of romantic who put a premium on particular and idealised visions of 'unspoilt' Africa, and yet who also felt the need to alter this. They were uncertain as to what the answers to this conundrum were, more acutely aware than most that no societal system could be perfect, and for a variety of reasons this awareness loomed larger in their field of view than among the majority. Some of them opted into ways of perceiving existence that stood firmly aside from metropolitan mainstream influences. They were frequently modernist in mentality, in stark contrast to the majority of their peers, though not always. In one sense they were men ahead of their time, men who represented the vanguard of a transition from an old surety of action to a more modern sense of vulnerability at the heart of empire. They demonstrate the difficulty in ascribing to all a united mentality, but they were not paradigmatic.

## Civilization and its contents

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*To-day the whole world knows that the British Empire stands unshaken; that it is bound together by a thousand invisible influences; that there is no thinkable substitute for it consistent with the world's welfare... that its common intercourse is becoming closer and more fruitful than ever; and that its enduring vitality is turning out to be one of the surprises of the age.*<sup>1</sup>

James Garvin, *The Observer*, 14 November 1926

The distillation of events into historical narrative tends to engender a concentration upon the 'big events' of a given period. The 'big events' of the interwar era – post-World War One social malaise, the strike of 1926 and the perceived threat of a Moscow-controlled Labour and Unions movement, the depression ushered in by the Wall Street Crash in 1929, and the rise of the dictators – have all been taken by some as evidence that the interwar middle classes were pushed and pulled from crisis to crisis, unsure of themselves and their place in the world, and of their government's ability to hold things together.<sup>2</sup> Historical works with ominous

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<sup>1</sup> J. L. Garvin, *The Observer*, 14 November 1926, p.16

<sup>2</sup> For example, E. Hobsbawm, *On history* (1997; London, 1998), p.338. This argument is spread across academic works that examine widely differing aspects of the period; J. Auerbach, 'Art, advertising, and the legacy of empire', in *Journal of popular culture* 35 (2002), p.17; J. Stapleton, *Political intellectuals and public identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester, 2001), p.58

titles testify to this common perception.<sup>3</sup> Robert Skidelsky has contended that the inability of both the Labour and National Governments to deal with the Crash helped create a mood of 'national self-doubt', and that it took Dunkirk to 'give the British faith in themselves once again'.<sup>4</sup> Keith Jeffery goes even further, arguing that the economic difficulties Britain faced in reverting to peacetime at the end of the 1910s set the tone for the remainder of the period, making it untrue to state that such issues 'were no more than a series of colossal irritations which the "weary Titan" took easily in his stride. The constant threat of military disaster was real enough.'<sup>5</sup> From this viewpoint, it is no wonder that P. G. Wodehouse biographer Robert McCrum suggests that his subject's novels were a much-needed tonic in the post-1918 'gloomy, neurotic atmosphere'.<sup>6</sup>

If all of this were the case, then it would have obvious ramifications for metropolitan perceptions as to the ability of Britain to run and develop its empire. However, this chapter contends that the degree to which the interwar middle classes feared for the future of the world as they knew it has been exaggerated. This is not to deny that the mainstream media expounded on issues that people were afraid of, for it undoubtedly did so. However, the media dealt with these perceived threats with confidence. Britain and its empire would be victorious. Such confidence was borne of a genuine belief in the ability of Britain to combat its enemies, rather than a mere attempt to put a positive gloss on things to prevent general panic. Until the mid- to late-'thirties, until Abyssinia, the Sudetenland and the consequent failure of appeasement, nothing seriously undermined the faith as expressed by the key commentators of the time in the future of Britain and in her ability to make the world a better place through

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<sup>3</sup> R. J. Sontag, *A broken world 1919-1939* (New York, 1973); W. McElwee, *Britain's locust years 1918-1940* (London, 1962); P. Brendon, *Dark valley: A panorama of the 1930s* (London, 2000). On such pessimism, see especially *ibid.*, pp.150-173, 353-73, 516-40, 590-1

<sup>4</sup> R. Skidelsky, *Politicians and the slump: The Labour government of 1929-1931* (London, 1967), pp.386-7; this is supported by A. Marwick, *Britain in the century of total war: War, peace and social change 1900-1967* (1968; Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.210, 226-41; see also P. Clarke, *Hope and glory: Britain 1900-2000* (1996; London, 2004), p.3; F. Murray, *The making of British policy on tropical Africa (1920-1940): Approaches to and influences on policy-making* (PhD thesis, University of Newcastle, 2001), pp.26-7, 32; for an argument that insecurities over the empire existed prior to 1914, see N. Vance, *The Victorians and ancient Rome* (Oxford, 1997), pp.233, 246

<sup>5</sup> K. Jeffery, *The British army and the crisis of empire 1918-1922* (Manchester, 1984), pp.161-2

<sup>6</sup> R. McCrum, *Wodehouse: A life* (2004; London, 2005), p.143

her empire. While the messages put forward to interwar readers lacked the marked swagger of so many pre-1918 imperialist tracts, they nonetheless remained overwhelmingly optimistic about Britain's future, which contributed to and consolidated a confidence in Britain's ability to fashion her imperial territories as she deemed necessary.

First, the economic perceptions and realities of the period require evaluation. Ross McKibbin has shown that, in the interwar years, the middle classes were at their weakest economically between 1918 and 1923, but that even during this period there is 'little evidence that the middle class as a whole suffered, absolutely or relatively, from post-war circumstances.'<sup>7</sup> There was a marked divergence between the experiences of the working and middle classes in the interwar period. Taxation favoured the latter and, with the single exception of 1930-1, their consumption of durable goods rose year on year; even those middle-class occupations most sensitive to economic change saw nowhere near the magnitude of joblessness suffered by the working class with unemployment rates amongst managers and administrators in the twelve major industrial groups averaging only 1.9% in 1931.<sup>8</sup> The uninterrupted growth in service and administrative jobs accounts for the fact that 1929 did not impede house-building activity at this time.<sup>9</sup> There is much in Cannadine's argument that the alarmist clarion calls of an interwar Churchill who 'saw enemies everywhere' found so little purchase, at least until the mid- to late-'thirties, because life for the middle classes was one of ever-growing affluence, which masked – or at least greatly undermined – a sense of decline amongst the majority.<sup>10</sup> Even if Churchill's speaking skills were appreciated in the House of Commons, for the most part he remained of little influence;

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<sup>7</sup> R. McKibbin, *Classes and cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford, 1998), pp.50-5, quote at p.51; see also A. J. P. Taylor, *English history 1914-1945* (1965; Harmondsworth, 1970), p.216

<sup>8</sup> McKibbin, *Classes and cultures*, pp. 60-1, 161; see also H. Meller, *Patrick Geddes: Social evolutionist and city planner* (London, 1990), p.294

<sup>9</sup> A. A. Jackson, *Semi-detached London: Suburban development, life and transport, 1900-39* (London, 1973), p.100

<sup>10</sup> Cannadine, *In Churchill's shadow: Confronting the past in modern Britain* (2002; Oxford, 2003), pp.34-5, 44

however much people enjoyed listening to the orator of old, they invariably disagreed with him.<sup>11</sup>

So, insofar as the interwar period did affect the economic strength of Britain, the perceptible effects of this as felt by the middle classes were mitigated by their own economic situation. And yet, even if the middle classes had looked at Britain as a whole, they would not have perceived it as a land financially crippled by the Great War to the extent that some historians have deemed in retrospect. Notions of power being relative, the decline in resources at Britain's disposal after 1918 was less apparent than her economic advantage over European rivals, and the fact that the still-isolationist US was only just beginning to emerge as a world economic force.<sup>12</sup> Britain was hit by 1914-8 and the 1929 crash far less than the other European nations, as British commentators and politicians recognised.<sup>13</sup> D. K. Fieldhouse has argued that Britain's acceptance of a deficit on her visible trade with the empire to enable continued profits from invisible trading, though 'potentially enervating to all parties in the long term', was 'probably beneficial to Britain and the rest of the Empire in the 1930s',<sup>14</sup> while Cain and Hopkins have argued that it was only World War Two that halted the ability of Britain to be an energetic economic power.<sup>15</sup> There seems to be evidence that people did not view

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<sup>11</sup> R. A. C. Parker, *Churchill and appeasement* (2000; London, 2001), pp.52, 60-1; H. Clifford to Gowers, 20 April 1923, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1149/36

<sup>12</sup> P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British imperialism: Crisis and deconstruction 1914-1990* (London, 1993), pp.4-5; see also P. Kennedy, *The realities behind diplomacy: Background influences on British external policy, 1865-1980* (1981; London, 1985), pp.224-5

<sup>13</sup> 'The basis of real peace', in *The Observer*, 4 January 1920, p.12; 'Labour and the empire', in *The Observer*, 6 January 1924, p.12; 'A pause', in *The Times*, 17 July 1931, p.15; 'Practical politics', in *The Times*, 25 September 1931, p.13; see also 'Unsettled Europe', in *The Times*, 16 May 1932, p.11; 'The Prime Minister's journey', in *The Times*, 11 June 1932, p.13; Kennedy, *Realities*, pp.6, 224-5, 312; H. Strachan, *The First World War* (2003; London, 2006), pp.xvi-xvii; E. Goldstein, 'The evolution of British diplomatic strategy for the Locarno Pact, 1924-1925', in *Diplomacy and world power: Studies in British foreign policy, 1890-1950*, M. Dockrill and B. McKercher (eds.), (Cambridge, 1996), p.118; H. Clout, *After the ruins: Restoring the countryside of Northern France after the Great War* (Exeter, 1996), passim, especially pp.52-8. Despite this, there remained a sense that Europe as a whole remained a far better place than any other continent on the globe, especially before the political pre-eminence of the dictators became evident to the British; R. B. Mowat, 'The pleasantness of European life', in *The quarterly review* 486 (1925), pp.255-66

<sup>14</sup> D. K. Fieldhouse, 'The metropolitan economics of Empire', in Brown and Louis, *Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume IV*, p.112

<sup>15</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British imperialism*, p.6; see also Cain and Hopkins, 'Gentlemanly capitalism and British expansion overseas II: New imperialism, 1850-1945', in *Economic history review* 40 (1987), pp.19-20



themselves as mired in economic decline, instead exhibiting a dynamism, vitality and sense of purpose throughout the interwar period.<sup>16</sup> The matter is one worthy of further study but, whatever the answer, it remains that the nation's financial state was then viewed as far less parlous, at the very least in the short- to mid-term, than retrospective notions of steady decline might suggest.<sup>17</sup>

It was in the political, rather than the economic, arena that the biggest threat to Britain was perceived to exist. Fears over Bolshevik influence infiltrating or 'contaminating' Britain undoubtedly existed, and this unease was played upon by some of the writers of the period for dramatic effect.<sup>18</sup> This was despite the fact that the Communist Party of Great Britain was numerically weak and that its policies were shaped by more than Comintern declarations alone.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, any fears that fiction might have generated were allayed by the interwar Tory press, which generally alternated between declarations of genuine confidence in the ability of Conservatives to both work peaceably with the moderate left to achieve consensus, (and thus keep those further to the left out of power), and in the ability of the centre and right to rein in these groups and protect stability and democracy when it was felt that the moderate left was being unreasonable or even dangerous. For an example of the former, while warning against complacency in guarding against any attempts by the far left to undermine due democratic process, in March 1919 a *The Times* editorial was able to declare 'So far, so good', praising 'the national sanity' that had prevented Britain from going the same way as the rest of the post-war world, then judged to be 'seething with a social ferment' instigated by revolutionaries; the 'steadiness of this country', the paper continued, 'is not less a bulwark against general anarchy than was its steadiness in war a bulwark against general subjugation

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<sup>16</sup> For example, P. Ackroyd, *London: The biography* (London, 2000), pp.721, 723; see also C. Cockburn, *Bestseller: The books that everyone read 1900-1939* (London, 1972), p.181

<sup>17</sup> This supports Addison's thesis that the scale of British economic recovery after 1931 was one of the reasons for Conservatism's 'buoyancy' until 1939; P. Addison, *The road to 1945: British politics and the Second World War* (London, 1975), p.26, see also p.36

<sup>18</sup> For example, A. Christie, *The secret adversary* (1922; London, 1991)

<sup>19</sup> J. Rée, *Proletarian philosophers: Problems in socialist culture in Britain, 1900-1940* (Oxford, 1984), p.89; A. Thorpe, 'Comintern 'control' of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-43', in *English historical review* 113 (1998), pp.637-62; H. Roffman, *Understanding the Cold War: A study of the Cold War in the interwar period* (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1977), p.19

by Germany'.<sup>20</sup> Other editorials of a similar tone followed,<sup>21</sup> and in 1922 *The Times* argued that the then-recent Labour Party Conference had given 'the plainest possible indication of its [the Labour Party's] hostility to the Communists and all their works', proving the paper's point that the party was at heart a good and sane thing.<sup>22</sup> Neither was the Labour Party seriously seen as a dismantler of empire. Even after the 1924 government and the 1926 strike, one establishment and military figure argued that if the Wafd and other political parties believed any Labour government would grant more concessions to Egypt than the Conservatives, without the internal stability of that country increasing, they were much mistaken.<sup>23</sup> This tendency towards emphasising a moderate side to Labour is perhaps unsurprising, given that elite conservatives were on occasion very close friends with those on the left, including socialists; how could they be nasty revolutionaries if they were nice people?<sup>24</sup>

When the media was more emphatic in its opposition to the left, the same approach remained. James Garvin, the editor of *The Observer*, once remarked that socialism

has no answer to anything... it talks about the future in terms of elaborate, dogmatic, unrealisable abstraction... Socialism flogs away at MARX's dead donkey with the dream of making it fly like Pegasus.<sup>25</sup>

But even Garvin remained overwhelmingly confident as to the ability of Britain to continue to steer a pro-Empire course under Labour. He felt that the Labour Government of 1924 was

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<sup>20</sup> 'So far, so good', in *The Times*, 28 March 1919, p.13; see also 'Students of socialism', in *The Times*, 31 August 1923, p.9

<sup>21</sup> For example, see 'Direct and political action', in *The Times*, 26 June 1919, p.13; 'A call to work', in *The Times*, 28 August 1919, p.11; 'Industrial strife in America', in *The Times*, 28 October 1919, p.13; 'Another pause for reflection', in *The Times*, 16 April 1921, p.9

<sup>22</sup> 'Labour and the nation', in *The Times*, 30 June 1922, p.17. For a sense of Labour being led by a moderate MacDonald, see diary entry for 13 February 1923, in J. J. Norwich (ed.), *The Duff Cooper diaries: 1915-1951* (London, 2005), p.174. Incidentally, it slightly bewildered leftwingers such as Bertrand Russell that American socialists believed the British Labour Party's aim was revolution; R. Monk, *Bertrand Russell: The ghost of madness* (2000; London, 2001), p.39

<sup>23</sup> E. W. P. Newman, *Great Britain in Egypt* (London, 1928), p.280

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, diary entry for 3 September 1915, in Norwich (ed.), *Duff Cooper diaries*, p.15

<sup>25</sup> Capitals in original text; Garvin, 'What's in a name?', in *The Observer*, 9 October 1927, p.16

successful in the arena of foreign affairs because it was not a proper 'Socialist Ministry'.<sup>26</sup> Others were not even worried by potential ramifications of the General Strike of 1926.<sup>27</sup> To top all of this, Labour primarily lost the October 1924 election because of a switch of support from the disintegrating Liberal Party to the Conservatives, rather than as a result of the infamous Zinoviev letter, minimising the extent to which a widespread 'Red Scare' in Britain led to Ramsay MacDonald's downfall.<sup>28</sup>

During this period, when the Labour Party was deemed to have wandered away from a sane line – as in August 1920, when it seemingly sanctioned "'direct action" at the discretion of a council of Labour leaders' – *The Times* argued that the English have

ever abhorred tyranny in every shape and form. It will no more tolerate it from a Labour "Committee of National Security" than it would from an unconstitutional Sovereign. It needs only to be informed and to have the issue put clearly before it... When it has been made plain, we have no fear of the answer the people will give.<sup>29</sup>

Whatever happened in domestic politics, the editorials argued, sense would prevail.

As for the threat of the European dictators and the ramifications of their rise to power in Italy, Germany and elsewhere, the threat these were then felt to pose can be exaggerated in retrospect. Interwar society was relatively slow to pick up on the danger that Hitler and the other dictators posed to European political stability. Small leftist publications aside, newspapers and journals did not criticise Mussolini with any vigour until the crisis over Abyssinia which, despite the Manchurian affair of 1931 onwards, was the first major event

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<sup>26</sup> Garvin, 'Can Labour last?', in *The Observer*, 20 April 1924, p.10. The other response was to belittle Bolsheviks and make them look silly; see, for example, P. G. Wodehouse, *Love among the chickens* (1921; London, 2002), p.36; 'Socialist jargon: A proletarian anthology', in *The Times*, 12 January 1927, p.13

<sup>27</sup> See for example Leo Amery's comments that it had been the 'mildest-mannered revolution that ever tried to coerce a constitutional government'; quoted in D. Faber, *Speaking for England: Leo, Julian and John Amery – The tragedy of a political family* (London, 2005), p.206

<sup>28</sup> Marwick, *Britain in the century of total war*, p.198

<sup>29</sup> 'The issue', in *The Times*, 14 August 1920, p.11; see also 'The road to prosperity', in *The Times*, 8 September 1922, p.11

that shook those Britons who supported the League of Nations and the ideal of international collective security.<sup>30</sup> Even then, a sense of security and stability did not readily leave some; right up to the outbreak of war in September 1939 there remained those who believed that it would never come.<sup>31</sup>

Few took much interest in Hitler's dictatorship in its first few years of existence, and even then the minority who did found it difficult to grasp the enormity of what the National Socialist movement meant.<sup>32</sup> In 1932 *The Times* labelled Hitler a 'moderate' who was gradually gaining a sense of responsibility where he had been a revolutionary before.<sup>33</sup> This line continued into 1933, a year when the *Economist* was alone among Tory press publications in displaying apprehension over the future once Germany had regained her strength again; even when details of domestic brutality under the Nazis began to emerge, it was generally deemed that there was no reason to see such activity as indicative of the nature of future National Socialist foreign policy.<sup>34</sup>

The interest certain sections of the media took in Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) raises a different question; were the British as a whole so slow to criticize the fascists

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<sup>30</sup> C. Keserich, 'The British Labour press and Italian fascism, 1922-25', in *Journal of contemporary history* 10 (1975), pp.579-90; 'A meeting in North Italy?', in *The Times*, 15 March 1933, p.15; 'The fascist system', in *The Times*, 2 November 1933, p.13; 'The League in crisis', in *The Round Table* 101 (1935), p.13; 'World crisis', in *The Round Table* 103 (1936), p.454; 'Danger signs for the Commonwealth', in *The Round Table* 105 (1936), p.1; F. S. Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its life and times 1920-1946* (Leicester, 1986), pp.164, 221; G. Scott, *The rise and fall of the League of Nations* (London, 1973), p.318; there was a similarly late change in American perceptions; B. L. Alpers, *Dictators, democracy, and American public culture: Envisioning the totalitarian enemy, 1920s to 1950s* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2003), pp.15-58, 78

<sup>31</sup> As late as 31 August 1939, Mass Observation recorded that only one in five believed that war would come, even if such a figure had been higher 18 months previously, when Eden had resigned as Foreign Secretary following disagreements with Chamberlain over policy, and even if this percentage would immediately increase, somewhat understandably, in September 1939; A. Calder, *The people's war: Britain 1939-1945* (1969; London, 1992), pp.32-3. However, in 1938 P. G. Wodehouse believed that 'the world has never been farther from a war than it is at present'; quoted in McCrum, *Wodehouse*, p.257

<sup>32</sup> I. Kershaw, *Making friends with Hitler: Lord Londonderry and Britain's road to war* (2004; London, 2005), p.26

<sup>33</sup> 'Herr Hitler's successes', in *The Times*, 26 April 1932, p.17; Kershaw, *Making friends*, pp.29-30

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.28-33. In 1931 *The Economist* concluded a special supplement by 'urging most earnestly upon all Governments concerned that they lose no time in taking the necessary measures for bringing about such conditions as will allow financial operations to bring to Germany... sorely-needed assistance'; 'The credit situation of Germany', supplement to *The Economist*, 22 August 1931, p.4

because a far-right authoritarian program, or a partial version of this, was attractive to them? This would not appear to be the case. According to Martin Pugh, the BUF failed to capitalise on initial press support from publications such as the *Daily Mail* because of the light impact of the depression upon the middle classes, the alienation of the BUF from 'respectable Conservative' opinion and, most importantly of all, because attempts to groom a personality cult around Mosley were undermined by the popularity of the monarchy at this time.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, many of those who were attracted to the BUF came to reject the party once they understood something of its nature behind the palingenetic sloganeering.<sup>36</sup> At the BUF's rally at the Olympia In June 1934, hecklers were picked out by powerful spotlights and beaten by blackshirt stewards while Mosley halted his speech so that all could concentrate on the violence. Public disgust at this led to the BUF's membership falling from approximately 40,000 to 5,000 in a year, Mosley being banned from the BBC and a withdrawal of mainstream media support.<sup>37</sup> Even then, some of those who remained were attracted by the anti-semitic nature of the organisation, and did not necessarily view it as a means of dismantling democracy. This is unsurprising given that, irrespective of any secret plans for the future should he attain power, Mosley always publicly insisted upon his respect for constitutional government.<sup>38</sup> At any rate, despite it being more popular than its predecessors, such as the

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<sup>35</sup> M. Pugh, *The Tories and the people 1880-1935* (Oxford, 1985), p.191. Such arguments are more convincing than Brustein and Berntson's belief that fascism grew most in areas where leftist parties refused to abandon revolutionary programs; W. Brustein and M. Berntson, 'Interwar fascist popularity in Europe and the default of the left', in *European sociological review* 15 (1999), pp.159-78

<sup>36</sup> On palingenetic 'rebirth', see R. Griffin, *The nature of fascism* (London, 1991), especially pp.32-6

<sup>37</sup> However, initial reactions to the rally from the right were slightly more relaxed, with Rothermere only publicly renouncing support for the BUF in light of economic pressure put on him by potential advertisers; Pugh, *'Hurrah for the blackshirts!': Fascists and fascism in Britain between the wars* (London, 2005), pp.156-69. For an inevitable opposition to the view that the blackshirts were the ones being violent, see O. Mosley, *My life* (1968), pp.296-300

<sup>38</sup> Pugh, *Hurrah*, pp.128-9, 135. At any rate, many of the same men who marched against the Jews in the East End of London at the very end of the 'thirties signed up to fight against Hitler. Coming at a time when Mosley was opposed to any conflict with the Nazis, this demonstrates that even some of those that espoused certain aspects of the blackshirt creed did not necessarily become fascist followers of Germany in totality; I am indebted to Emily Durling for her discussion of her grandfather's experiences of the East End at the end of the 1930s; interview with E. Durling, 1 June 2005

Imperial Fascist League and The Britons,<sup>39</sup> support for the BUF was only ever highly localized; it was largely confined to the East End of London and certain sections of East Anglia.<sup>40</sup>

If anything, faith in the ability of democracy to operate smoothly in a parliamentary system only increased after 1918. British political institutions and values survived the global conflict intact and victorious.<sup>41</sup> The liberal theoretician Professor Ernest Baker argued that the emergent dictatorships in Europe and beyond were temporary phenomena that would begin to die away because initial enthusiasm for them would fade, but it was not merely liberals who believed in the enduring nature of parliamentary democracy. Compared to other countries such as France,<sup>42</sup> the British mainstream press of the interwar period reflected a public who remained committed to this system of government.<sup>43</sup>

With British ideas about the metropole analysed, it is now necessary to ascertain how far these were felt to be applicable in a global context, and how far the British concerned themselves with imperial matters. The most immediate challenge to the idea that the British public was keen and eager for British ideas to be spread across those parts of the world map marked in red is provided by Bernard Porter, who directly refutes John Mackenzie and

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<sup>39</sup> J. Morell, 'Arnold Leese and the Imperial Fascist League: The impact of racial fascism', in *British fascism: Essays on the radical right in inter-war Britain*, K. Lunn and R. C. Thurlow (eds.), (London, 1980), p.58; G. C. Lebzelter, 'Henry Hamilton Beamish and The Britons: Champions of anti-semitism', in *ibid.*, pp.41-56

<sup>40</sup> J. D. Brewer, *Mosley's men: The British Union of Fascists in the West Midlands* (Aldershot, 1984), pp.148-9. Brewer's work also undermines Skidelsky's argument that the BUF did not lose much by way of support between 1934 and 1939, an argument which is based upon his already-noted assumption that the British of the 'thirties were more disgruntled than seems to have been the case; Skidelsky, *Oswald Mosley* (London, 1975), pp.317-33

<sup>41</sup> Pugh, 'Domestic politics', in *The First World War in British history*, S. Constantine, M. W. Kirby and M. B. Rose (eds.), (1995), p.28

<sup>42</sup> G. R. Searle, *Corruption in British politics 1895-1930* (Oxford, 1987), pp.414-20; J. J. Matthews, 'The death of press reform in France', in *The public opinion quarterly* 3 (1939), pp.409-19

<sup>43</sup> E. Baker, 'Democracy since the war and its prospects for the future', in *International affairs* 13 (1934), p.764; 'Peace and character', in *The Times*, 21 January 1930, p.15; 'The demand for action', in *The Times*, 19 January 1934, p.15; 'The parliamentary way', in *The Times*, 16 February 1934, p.15; hence, during the three months from October 1930 when a notion of 'national crisis' took hold, a National Government was viewed as the surest way of overcoming this 'crisis'; this was democracy entering a 'new phase' capable of meeting new challenges; P. Williamson, *National crisis and national government: British politics, the economy and empire, 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), p.16; 'The part meeting', in *The Times*, 31 October 1930, p.15; 'A national policy', in *The Times*, 26 November 1930, p.15; Callisthenes, 'Seasonable thought', in *The Times*, 5 December 1930, p.12

Catherine Hall by claiming that, apart from the late nineteenth century when it was necessary for British elites to secure the support of the masses, all except a minority were essentially uninterested in the empire.<sup>44</sup> With respect to interwar culture, Alison Light believes there was a sharp move away from Victorian and Edwardian 'masculine' public rhetorics of national destiny, and a corresponding retreat into a more inward-looking domesticity, as works by Agatha Christie among others reputedly show.<sup>45</sup>

However, while it is certainly true that the interwar middle classes were for the most part more interested in domestic than supra-British affairs, to deny that the empire formed an important part of British identity and that the British at this time had a continued and deep-held interest in the survival of the empire is to push the case too far. There are three main points made here that go against Porter's assumptions. Firstly, one suspects that the Hugh Clifford's pessimism about the British people's lack of interest in empire was a result of a lack of public engagement with the specifics of empire, rather than an apathy about empire *per se*.<sup>46</sup> Among other commentators, Sir Reginald Coupland, the Beit Professor of Colonial History at Oxford, believed that the First World War had stimulated interest in the 'non-European world'.<sup>47</sup> This is borne out by the 321,232 people who visited the 1924 British Empire Exhibition at Wembley on the Whit Monday, (9 June), of that year alone. This figure is unsurprising given that newspapers such as *The Times* had been dedicating approving leaders to the exhibition since 1920,<sup>48</sup> and supports Stephen Constantine's argument that World War

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<sup>44</sup> J. M. Mackenzie (ed.), *Imperialism and popular culture* (Manchester, 1986); C. Hall, *Civilising subjects: Metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2002); B. Porter, *The absent-minded imperialists: Empire, society, and culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004), *passim*, especially pp.168, 194, 255-75

<sup>45</sup> A. Light, *Forever England: Femininity, literature and conservatism between the wars* (London, 1991), *passim*, especially p.8. Porter would not, however, support Light's case, given that he argues that there remained some works that promoted empire in the interwar period; for him it was merely that the ideas behind them were not accepted by the masses; Porter, *Absent-minded imperialists*, pp.258-61

<sup>46</sup> Clifford, 'United Nigeria', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 21 (1921), p.3

<sup>47</sup> R. Coupland, 'The Hailey survey', in *Africa*, 12 (1939), p.2; J. Roscoe, *Twenty-five years in East Africa* (London, 1921), p.276; 'Review of *Early days in East Africa* by Sir Frederick Jackson', in *The Observer*, 23 November 1930, p.4

<sup>48</sup> For example, 'An empire exhibition', in *The Times*, 8 June 1920, p.15; 'The British Empire exhibition', in *The Times*, 13 October 1921, p.11; 'The British Empire exhibition', in *The Times*, 10 January 1922, p.11

One did not disabuse the British of their 'imperial mythologies and instincts'.<sup>49</sup> If the 1925 exhibition lacked the novelty of, and followed on too quickly from, its predecessor to be as successful, this was not indicative of a general lack of interest in empire, else the 12 million visitors to the Glasgow Empire Exhibition in 1938 cannot be accounted for.<sup>50</sup> This interest was not merely confined to big events. One man who would go out to be an official in the Sudan and Northern Rhodesia remembers how, at the age of eight in 1934, the empire was a frequent topic of everyday discussion in England.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, Porter has argued that the low numbers of questions tabled about the empire indicates a lack of concern for imperial matters among all in parliament barring a small minority.<sup>52</sup> But the relatively slight amount of time spent debating matters such as the dominion constitutions was not symptomatic of a lack of any general interest in empire.<sup>53</sup> There was, after all, a corresponding lack of interest in the specific intricacies of how the domestic economy and local government functioned, as even a cursory look at the debates surrounding the topics in *Hansard* shows. MPs were, instead, interested in the 'big questions'. In a busy parliamentary schedule, they preferred to concentrate on matters perceived as requiring immediate attention. Interwar Africans presented few of these pressing issues to the metropole, with the exception of Egyptian nationalists and a small number of uprisings such as the brief insurrectionary activity organised by 'Ali 'Abd al-Latif's White Flag League in the Sudan in 1924. The continent was therefore deemed relatively stable, and thus the continent did not generally capture the headlines in the way that India and the claims of the subcontinent's nationalists did.<sup>54</sup> When 'big' issues such as confrontations over the rights of

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<sup>49</sup> Constantine, 'Britain and the Empire', in *The First World War in British history*, p.277; see also 'Wembley to open earlier', in *Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1924, p.10

<sup>50</sup> A. N. Wilson, *After the Victorians* (London, 2005), pp.273, 276; 'Glasgow and the empire', in *The Times*, 7 April 1938, p.15

<sup>51</sup> Interview with Bowcock, 9 September 2006

<sup>52</sup> Porter, *Absent-minded imperialists*, pp.270-2; here Porter draws heavily upon Murray, *Making*, pp.39-40

<sup>53</sup> 'The crown colonies', in *The Morning Post*, 25 November 1933, p.10

<sup>54</sup> On the White Flag League, see M. A. Rahim, *Imperialism and nationalism in the Sudan: A study in constitutional and political development 1899-1956* (1969; Khartoum, 1986), p.104; S. L. Milligan, '1924 mutiny', SAD 798/9. Even then, it was reported in Britain that the mutiny of November 1924 was a result of non-indigenous Egyptian insurrectionists, with the majority of the Sudanese apparently 'unreservedly' expressing their pleasure that Egyptian military



white settlers in East Africa developed, there was a correspondingly large focus on them in parliament and the press.<sup>55</sup>

Lastly, Porter pays no attention to important bestselling authors such as Edgar Wallace. Over 50 million copies of the writer's works were printed, making him the biggest name in interwar fiction by a considerable distance.<sup>56</sup> Works by Wallace set in Africa that detail imperial activity, such as *Bones of the river* (1923), *Sanders* (1926), and *Again Sanders* (1928) were eagerly consumed in vast quantities. If these are taken alongside the works of other hugely popular writers such as C. S. Forester and John Buchan that are set on the continent, there was undoubtedly interest in this part of the empire. Plenty of novels of the time did not concern themselves with the empire – for example, Wodehouse often concentrated wholly on domestic affairs – but neither did many bestsellers of the late Victorian era that marks, for Porter, a heightened concentration upon empire.<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to see, in what interwar Britons wanted to read, any evidence of a lack of interest in this subject.

The other key challenge to the notion that the British were happy exporting Western ideas and social systems to the empire comes from Martin Wiener. Wiener argues that British society in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was highly ambivalent as to the value of industrialization. Instead, the greatest cultural aim of the people 'lay in taming and "civilizing" the dangerous engines of progress'.<sup>58</sup> For Wiener this is a problem:

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units were to be removed from the Sudan when this was announced on the day the mutiny began; 'The Khartum [sic] mutiny', in *The Times*, 8 December 1924, p.13; 'The outbreak at Khartoum', in *The Daily Telegraph*, 19 December 1924; see also 'Sudan riots', in *The Sunday Times*, 17 August 1924, p.8

<sup>55</sup> The nature of such attention will be discussed in Chapter Three.

<sup>56</sup> W. W. Dixon, 'The colonial vision of Edgar Wallace', in *Journal of popular culture* 32 (1998), p.122; see also M. Lane, *Edgar Wallace: The biography of a phenomenon* (London, 1938), pp.72, 94

<sup>57</sup> Wodehouse, *Summer lightning* (1929; 2002); G. and W. Grossmith, *The diary of a nobody* (1892; London, 1999)

<sup>58</sup> M. J. Wiener, *English culture and the decline of the industrial spirit 1850-1980* (1981; Harmondsworth; 1985), passim, quote at p.6; see also C. Barnett, *The audit of war: The illusion & reality of Britain as a great nation* (London, 1986), passim, especially pp.11-8

Over the past century... high among the internal checks upon British economic growth has been a pattern of industrial behaviour suspicious of change, reluctant to innovate, energetic only in maintaining the status quo.<sup>59</sup>

In making such claims, Wiener exaggerates both the numerical significance of those public commentators who opposed industry and development in the interwar period, and the extent to which the public agreed with them. One of the key figures Wiener analyses with regards to the interwar period is William R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's from 1911. Wiener argues that Inge embodied a mainstream rejection of much of what modernity was felt to represent. Despite Inge's reputation for being an eccentric, Wiener infers that the Dean's railing against business and industry, and vehement advocacy of the rural life was indicative of a wider trend, given that he was 'in many ways a thoroughly conventional member of the professional classes - fiercely patriotic, suspicious of left-wing intellectuals, proud of the public schools, and a lover of cricket'.<sup>60</sup> Wiener is correct that Inge was in the public eye in the interwar period, but he owed this interest to highly controversial, rather than largely-endorsed, views, which were usually roundly condemned in letters to newspaper editors.<sup>61</sup> This is not to say that all of what the man dubbed the 'Gloomy Dean' by the *Daily Mail* had to say was rejected out of hand. For instance *The Times* agreed with Inge that a 'belief in the rule of a law of progress is not justified by facts'; however, they disagreed with him by maintaining that 'we believe that the fact of progress can be proved'. Furthermore, with respect to Inge's claim that modern man was not mentally superior to the Romans, the paper retorted, '[w]e could examine these propositions in detail and water the fires of rhetoric with some chilling facts; but the task

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<sup>59</sup> Wiener, *English culture*, p.154

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, "'All stark mad together." The blindness of Dean Inge', in *The Times*, 31 July 1922, p.6; 'Dean Inge and the Germans', in *The Times*, 2 August 1922, p.8; 'Dean Inge and the Germans', in *The Times*, 4 August 1922, p.13. As H. H. Asquith kindly put it, the dean was 'a strange isolated figure, with all the culture in the world... but with kinks and twists both intellectual and temperamental'; H. H. Asquith, *Memories and reflections, 1852-1927*, A. Mackintosh (ed.), (London, 1928), Volume Two, p.232

would be idle and unsympathetic.<sup>62</sup> Whilst this does not prove that the majority did not concur with Inge in this one particular facet of his beliefs in itself, it is incorrect for Wiener to assume that an interest in what the Dean had to say can be taken as proof that he was taken as a conveyer of social 'truths'.<sup>63</sup>

Of course, in refuting Wiener, one must not go too far the other way. There was no cult of the machine in interwar Britain; constructivism and the pro-mechanistic aesthetics championed by the Soviet authorities never gained a foothold.<sup>64</sup> For example, Dziga Vertov's avant-garde film *The man with the movie camera* (1929), which depicts a Russian populace existing in harmony with an industrialised social structure (a structure formulated as the essential precondition for the happiness those in the film were experiencing), was a critically panned insignificant modernist blip on British cinematic viewing figures.<sup>65</sup> On the rare occasions that Futurism and Constructivism were discussed in the British press, they were derided as contrary to reason.<sup>66</sup> For the average upper-middle class Briton these ideas, and those of modernist artists in general, were foreign, silly and faddish, which can account for,

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<sup>62</sup> 'Dean Inge on progress', in *The Times*, 28 May 1920, p.13; see also A. Fox, *Dean Inge* (London, 1960), pp.139-49. Though very different politically, it seems that the dean was treated as someone such as Julie Burchill is today; more disliked and disagreed with than not, but still exerting a fascination engendered by commentaries deemed extreme or outrageous. After all, he made no qualms of the fact that he disliked most people most of the time, and was one of the most vehement public supporters of the idea that Britain was 'breeding... a new type of sub-men, abhorred by nature, and ugly as no natural product is ugly... In absence of any systematic race-culture, we shall gradually slide back into feeble and helpless creatures, the destined prey of some more vigorous stock'; *ibid.*, pp.122, 191; see also W. R. Inge, 'The white man and his rivals', in *The quarterly review* 467 (1921), p.239; Inge, 'Eugenics', in *The Edinburgh review* 236 (1922), pp.40-1

<sup>63</sup> There were writers such as Oxford fellow A. L. Rowse who were contradictory about current affairs and the values of the West, but they were of severely limited influence; in the case of Rowse it was not until the publication of his best-selling *A Cornish childhood* in 1942 that he became anything close to well-known or influential in any sphere other than Elizabethan history; see the aptly-titled R. Ollard, *A man of contradictions: A life of A. L. Rowse* (1999; London, 2000), *passim*, especially pp.91-101

<sup>64</sup> J. McCannon, 'Technological and scientific utopias in Soviet children's literature', in *Journal of popular culture* 34 (2001), pp.153-69; J. E. Bowlt, 'Russian art in the nineteen twenties', in *Soviet studies* 22 (1971), pp.575-94, especially pp.583-4; S. Boym, 'Paradoxes of unified culture: From Stalin's fairy tale to Molotov's lacquer box', in *Socialist realism without shores*, T. Lahusen, and E. Dobrenko (eds.), (Durham, NC, 1995), p.824

<sup>65</sup> D. Vertov (dir.), *The man with the movie camera* (1929); 'Film Society: The Man With The Movie Camera', in *The Times*, 12 January 1931, p.10; D. Brewster, *East-West passage: A study in literary relationships* (London, 1954), p.257

<sup>66</sup> M. Treter, 'Modern Polish buildings: The pressure of novelty', in *The Times*, 12 August 1933, p.11

among other things, the fact that the now-celebrated designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh died in relative obscurity.<sup>67</sup> This tied in with a common British critique of 'overly intellectual' ideas felt untempered by pragmatism and reality.<sup>68</sup>

This refutation of the cult of the machine did not, however, mean that industry was felt to be 'bad'. Much has been made by some of the Kibbo Kift Kindred, established as a youth movement to challenge the Scouts in the early twenties. J. L. Finlay, for example, sees it as an embodiment of the widely-held opinion that industrial civilization was defunct and a primitivist tribal training was in order.<sup>69</sup> However, as Paul Wilkinson has shown, the Kindred was always a minority movement, going considerably beyond the ideas contained within Robert Baden-Powell's *Scouting for boys* (1908). Scouting, by contrast, advocated an enjoyment of rural life as a temporary escape from, rather than a total renunciation of, all the modern world was felt to represent; this approach seems to be in keeping with the ideas of Conservative Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin.<sup>70</sup>

Attitudes towards industry instead epitomised a moderation the interwar British had long perceived to be one of their most prominent and likeable national characteristics. If anything, life after 1918 was even tamer and more moderate than it had been before 1914.<sup>71</sup> Criticisms of modern industry and commerce were not indictments of these activities *per se*, but instead arguments in favour of the moderation of such activities in order that they be in harmony

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<sup>67</sup> 'Exhibitions and catalogues', in *The art book* 4 (1997), p.17; see also D. Watkin, *A history of Western architecture* (1986; 1996), pp.549-59

<sup>68</sup> McCrum, *Wodehouse*, pp.136-7, 199, 209, 213, 232-3

<sup>69</sup> J. L. Finlay, 'John Hargrave, the Green Shirts, and social credit', in *Journal of contemporary history* 5 (1970), p.54

<sup>70</sup> P. Wilkinson, 'English youth movements, 1908-30', in *Journal of contemporary history* 4 (1969), pp.3, 19-21; see also R. Baden-Powell, *Scouting for boys: A handbook for instruction in good citizenship* (1908; Oxford, 2004), *passim*. Similarly, whereas post-1918 German discourses on war described a primitive mentality attained in the heat of battle as an ideal state of manliness, in England there was no wish for the primitive as something that was 'genuine', such a state of mind's existence was merely noted rather than aspired to; G. L. Mosse, *Fallen soldiers: Reshaping the memory of the World Wars* (1990; Oxford, 1991), pp.162-3

<sup>71</sup> For example, from 1918 onwards the main political parties successfully managed to dramatically shift the meaning attached to political meetings, from a Victorian and Edwardian custom that legitimised an assertive, sometimes boisterous presence in public politics, to one where such a mentality was denigrated; thus, democracy increasingly became seen as linked inextricably to peace, rationality and a sense of moderation; J. Lawrence, 'The transformation of British public politics after the First World War', in *Past and present* 190 (2006), pp.185-216

with nature and mankind. *The Observer* went as far as to welcome the day when mechanical creations operated so as to increase man's degree of leisure, arguing that it was only the 'economic rebels [in other words, the socialists] of our own day' who believed machines could become the masters of men.<sup>72</sup> Though it is recognised that her work was aimed predominantly at the newly-enfranchised woman, the public reaction to ceramics artist Clarice Cliff's work show how modernity and innovation could be endorsed when it was felt that they did not undermine established social values or run counter to 'common sense'.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, a British concern with history was a response to the experience of change, but did not necessarily imply any rejection of the 'industrial spirit' or 'progress' generally; instead, the past was felt to provide an inspiration for the present by its holding out 'examples of right conduct for modern-day Englishmen to follow'.<sup>74</sup> This did not mean that the press was entirely lacking any primitivistic clarion calls for Britain to shake off the trappings of civility and take to the caves. But if there were any such ideas occasionally put forward in the mainstream arena, these were usually gently satirical, often humorous, works borne out of a passing annoyance with Western society, rather than a deep-seated advocacy of a return to a pre-modern past.<sup>75</sup>

In the 'thirties in particular, the middle classes emerged as self-consciously modern, defining themselves as 'progressive' insofar as 'progress' advocated technical and scientific improvement.<sup>76</sup> This labelling was not simply confined to technical spheres.<sup>77</sup> This is unsurprising, given that many influential commentators were of a similar mind. Bestselling novelist and influential columnist Arnold Bennett is a notable example of a man who used his

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<sup>72</sup> 'Plato's slave: Mechanical man', in *The Observer*, 16 October 1927, p.16

<sup>73</sup> L. Knight, *Clarice Cliff* (London, 2005), pp.95-142. This sense of dynamism and a belief that one needed to hold onto traditions only insofar as they were correct for the modern world was expressed by the, albeit liberal, editor of *The Cornhill*, Lord Gorell; Lord Gorell, 'Tradition and change', in *The quarterly review* 537 (1938), pp.16-26

<sup>74</sup> P. Readman, 'The place of the past in English culture c.1890-1914', in *Past and present* 186 (2005), pp.147-99, quotes at pp.150, 191. However, the present author disagrees with Readman's assertion that this historical identity was 'dominated by a distinctively, largely inward-looking' sense of Englishness; *ibid.*, p.149

<sup>75</sup> 'To a very ancient ancestor', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 70 (1931), p.371

<sup>76</sup> McKibbin, *Classes and cultures*, p.49

<sup>77</sup> Garvin, 'The soul of a reign', in *The Observer*, 5 May 1935, p.16; A. Bingham, *Gender, modernity, and the popular press in inter-war Britain* (Oxford, 2004)

journalism as a sounding board from which to champion the gadgets and appliances of modern living.<sup>78</sup> Even those firmly relegated to the sidelines when it came to influencing mainstream opinion were often not as oppositional as might initially seem. Freud, whose work *Civilization and its discontents* (1930) argued that the conflict between sexual need and the societal standards of modern life created a 'death drive' and contrived to impose an enormous burden of guilt upon modern man, argued that in criticizing certain aspects of modernity 'we are exercising a legitimate right and are certainly not revealing ourselves as enemies of civilization', and that modern man has 'no reason whatever' to envy the life of the 'primitive' peoples of the world, as families within these peoples live in 'slavish suppression' to the head of their groups.<sup>79</sup>

Neither is such an endorsement of progress surprising given the nature of the nation's relationship with the machine; as George L. Mosse has shown, the First World War seemed to 'reconcile the conflict between modernity and its enemies' by putting machines in the service of the nation, and imbuing them with a romantic edge, with popular images turning aviators, for example, into knights of the sky. Hence a spiritualized technology was deemed able to perpetuate, rather than to undermine, pre-industrial attributes of the nation.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, innovation was welcomed more than it was opposed in interwar Britain; public anxiety over technical change was never completely alleviated but it never turned into forceful opposition, and where ambivalence did exist regarding innovation and progress, it predominantly manifested itself in a manner conducive to further change as a means of improving upon those innovations and progressions that had gone before.<sup>81</sup>

Mainstream discourses on the urban and the rural and the relationship between the two did not undermine any faith in the efficacy of the modern British way of life. Frank Trentmann has argued that in the interwar period, urbanization reached its peak, causing unprecedented

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<sup>78</sup> G. Gould, 'Arnold Bennett: His rank in fiction', in *The Observer*, 29 March 1931, p.14; G. Lafourcade, *Arnold Bennett: A study* (London, 1939), pp.51, 63

<sup>79</sup> S. Freud, *Civilization and its discontents*, D. McLintock (trans.), (1930; London, 2004), pp.65-6

<sup>80</sup> Mosse, *Fallen soldiers*, pp.66, 101; see also Searle, *A new England?: Peace and war 1886-1918* (Oxford, 2004), p.637

<sup>81</sup> For this argument, see Bienhard Rieger's excellent work; B. Rieger, 'Modern wonders': Technological innovation and public ambivalence in Britain and Germany, 1890s to 1933', in *History workshop journal* 55 (2003), pp.153-171

numbers of people to become anti-mechanistic, and disillusioned with a 'demystified world'.<sup>82</sup> This thesis would appear to be bolstered by the popularity of certain works, such as the Thomas Hardy 'classics' *Far from the madding crowd*, and more contemporary works such as Adrian Bell's *Silver ley* and *Corduroy* that dealt with rural life.<sup>83</sup> Aside from the fact that Hardy's fatalistic impulses often render as difficult any romantic reading of a non-industrial environment, though Trentmann may be correct that interwar neo-romantics did not in the main advocate a return to a pre-industrial society – their 'ideal new individual' remaining an 'urban body... freed of the abstract rationalism of modernity and morally balanced by a re-enactment of primal impulses' – the majority took rambling and the like to be a temporary relief from work, rather than a facet of a far-reaching new moral program.<sup>84</sup>

Instead of dismay or disillusionment, genuine optimism prevailed as to the ability of the British to both maintain a balance between the built-up and the 'untouched', and to improve those urban areas deemed worthy of further attention. Discussing the issue of such a balance, *The Times* noted that the 'problem may be summed up in a few words: it is how to civilize rural England without spoiling it', and agreed with the ideas of eminent town and country planner Professor Abercrombie that 'it should be possible for a stretch of country to absorb a large amount of building without destroying its beauty... Haphazard development, without reference to the consequences, may easily spoil the countryside; but a conscientiously directed development, however much it may change, may yet save it'.<sup>85</sup> As for London, one mainstream newspaper editorial deemed it 'the great, the beautiful, the inexhaustible city'.<sup>86</sup> Arnold Bennett's fiction, now virtually forgotten, buzzes excitedly at prospects for the

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<sup>82</sup> F. Trentmann, 'Civilization and its discontents: English neo-romanticism and the transformation of anti-modernism in twentieth-century Western culture', in *Journal of contemporary history* 29 (1994), p.587

<sup>83</sup> T. Hardy, *Far from the madding crowd* (1874; London, 1994); A. Bell, *Corduroy* (1930; London, 1948); Bell, *Silver ley* (1931; London, 1948); see also G. Cavaliero, *The rural tradition in the English novel 1900-1939* (London, 1977)

<sup>84</sup> Trentmann, 'Civilization and its discontents', p.603. In this, the British were like the New Yorkers for whom Central Park was built as a temporary means of respite from the pressure of work and city without seeking to overhaul conventions of commercial endeavour and the like; D. Haraway, *Primate visions: Gender, race, and nature in the world of modern science* (New York, 1989), p.26

<sup>85</sup> 'Rural planning', in *The Times*, 10 April 1926, p.11

<sup>86</sup> 'London pride', in *The Times*, 31 August 1929, p.11; see also diary entry for 19 September 1923, in Norwich (ed.), *Duff Cooper diaries*, p.180

construction of ever-better civic spaces, even in those areas hitherto characterised only by ugliness.<sup>87</sup> For those who believed the conditions of city life were impeding the ability of men to live in a spirit of '[e]nlightenment, public spirit, and responsibility', the new plans for garden cities such as Welwyn were the key to attaining higher standards of local administration and living.<sup>88</sup>

Such governing principles as dealt with in the domestic sphere, and the abiding general faith in the value of British actions, were linked to, and considerably bolstered, a belief that the British were 'right' to have an empire. For example, each new discovery in the field of tropical medicine was portrayed as another 'conquest' for mankind.<sup>89</sup> While it is unsurprising that efforts against disease should be heralded as 'good' work, what is of interest is the degree to which those working in this field were accorded respect; for *The Times* the men involved in the establishment of the London School of Tropical Medicine were nothing less than 'among the greatest names of our age... and their fame is imperishable',<sup>90</sup> sentiments echoed by letters to the editor from the great and good and general public alike.<sup>91</sup> These men were accorded full romanticised honours, the doctor working against disease being 'the silk-helmeted knight-errant who daily rides abroad to do battle with monsters for the redressing

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<sup>87</sup> J. Stobart, 'Building an urban identity. Cultural space and civic boosterism in a 'new' industrial town: Burslem, 1761-1911', in *Social history* 29 (2004), pp.493, 495

<sup>88</sup> 'Cities of the future', in *The Observer*, 16 May 1920, p.12; see also 'Garden cities and garden suburbs', in *The Times*, 25 February 1920, p.17; but see 'Garden cities or garden closes?', in *The Times*, 25 August 1922, p.13 for the belief that there 'is a joy of the country and a joy of the town. The garden city has neither the grace of the one nor the dignity of the other.' Therefore, while the early twentieth century did indeed witness the end of the Victorian consensus of the city as a paradigmatic source of civic pride, the disavowal of the city in favour of the garden city was not as great as Tristram Hunt believes; T. Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: The rise and fall of the Victorian city* (2004; London, 2005), pp.56, 126, 132, 416-53. See also Jackson, *Semi-detached London*, p.149

<sup>89</sup> 'Conquest of tropical disease', in *The Observer*, 3 May 1931, p.11; 'Tropical medicine', in *The Times*, 29 December 1921, p.9; see also 'The things which are little', in *The Times*, 8 June 1925, p.15. In reality, in the Sudan, for example, sleeping sickness was virtually wiped out by the mid- to late-'twenties, after having been a serious problem prior to 1914. However, illnesses such as smallpox, meningitis and, of course, malaria, continued to be of concern; Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, pp.449-50

<sup>90</sup> 'Tropical medicine', in *The Times*, 12 November 1921, p.11; see also 'Prevention of disease', in *The Times*, 16 July 1926, p.15; 'The wonderful years', in *The Times*, 27 July 1932, p.13; 'Sir Ronald Ross', in *The Times*, 17 September 1932, p.11; 'Tropical medicine', in *The Times*, 4 March 1936, p.15

<sup>91</sup> 'Tropical diseases', in *The Times*, 22 June 1923, p.15



of human wrongs... a modern hero';<sup>92</sup> therefore an earnest post-1918 romanticisation of technologies did not extend merely to those harnessed in times of conflict. Elsewhere, *The Observer* argued that the pioneers of flight 'did work more significant for the British Empire than for any other people' by their opening up of the prospects for 'continuing and closer union such as had not before dawned'.<sup>93</sup> Innovations in telegraphic communications received similar treatment.<sup>94</sup> It was only the unheeded modernists and extreme romanticists residing at the luddite end of the social spectrum who raised their voices in protest at such beliefs.

It is true, as Raphael Samuel once noted, that a 'gung-ho' attitude towards empire prevalent in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods was replaced after World War One with a more introverted sense of identity.<sup>95</sup> However, such introversion was predominantly a retreat into what was perceived as a safer world of empire, rather than solely England or Britain. Mass political unrest in France, starvation in Russia, and so on evidently outweighed the ramifications of ongoing political tension in the empire. Though India undoubtedly caused the British some headaches, the rise of nationalism in the subcontinent was not a persistent problem that loomed large in the metropole. Indeed, and contrary to the declarations of Churchill, the majority did not view the 1935 India Act as a surrender to nationalists, but as a 'careful, conservative' attempt to hold on to India that won much contemporary praise.<sup>96</sup> The Tory 'Diehardism' that emerged at the end of the Great War, which centred around the concept that the British Empire was beset with weakness and 'might be living on borrowed time', was weak, heavily concentrated in the West End, and there is little evidence of it altering political conceptions of empire among a wider populace.<sup>97</sup> Instead, 'if anything the inter-war years witnessed a deeper cultural penetration of imperial ideals', ideals of the

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<sup>92</sup> 'The romance of medicine', in *The Times*, 24 October 1923, p.15

<sup>93</sup> 'Practical links of empire', in *The Observer*, 21 August 1921, p.8

<sup>94</sup> 'A new imperial link', in *The Times*, 9 April 1938, p.13

<sup>95</sup> R. Samuel, *Island stories: Unravelling Britain – Theatres of memory, Volume II*, A. Light, S. Alexander, and G. Stedman Jones (eds.), (London, 1998), p.82

<sup>96</sup> J. Charmley, 'Review of *Holding India to the empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 constitution* by C. Bridge', in *English historical review* 106 (1991), p.746; see also 'Le Roy le veult', in *The Times*, 3 August 1935, p.11; G. W. Morris and L. S. Wood, *The English-speaking nations: A study in the development of the Commonwealth ideal* (1924; Oxford, 1930), pp.252-3

<sup>97</sup> A. S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British politics, c.1880-1932* (Harlow, 2000), pp.163-5

empire as a 'living principle', and a bastion of liberalism and democracy,<sup>98</sup> or, at least, democracy-in-waiting.

At any rate, until forced to deal with the pressing crises emanating there from the mid 'thirties onwards, successive British governments reduced European commitments where possible. This is not only reflected in political activity. In 1913 only 22% of British exports went to imperial destinations, compared to 47% in 1938. Similarly, the percentage of imports into Britain from the empire rose, while the extent to which Britain funded transnational, non-imperial projects fell.<sup>99</sup> Such statistics were reinforced by, and in turn reinforced, the success of the well-advertised Empire Marketing Board, which was able to minister to emerging modern lifestyles, a success that further reduced prices and increased middle class standards of living.<sup>100</sup> The empire was felt to be the arena in which England could best actively engage in furthering its trade aims while strife in Europe continued. Empire for racial glory became instead empire for enhanced security and stability.

In keeping with this move away from bombast, the British increasingly mocked themselves gently in public. Nevertheless, at the core of all of this, the perceived validity of what they were doing remained intact. In contrast to the original book, Alexander Korda's film version of *The four feathers* ridiculed the self-aggrandizing nature of some of General Gordon's contemporaries but, crucially, followed the printed version in never for one moment contemplating the end of empire.<sup>101</sup> Noël Coward may have said that only 'mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun', but he never ceased to be genuinely patriotic or to uphold the value of the empire.<sup>102</sup> The gloss had begun to come off some of the imperial

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., pp.183-5

<sup>99</sup> Samuel, *Island stories*, p.87

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.88; for some of these adverts see, for example, *The Daily Express*, 3 November 1926, p.3; *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 1926, p.11; see also *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 1926, p.7

<sup>101</sup> A. E. W. Mason, *The four feathers* (1902; New York, 2001); A. Korda (dir.), *The four feathers* (1939)

<sup>102</sup> P. Hoare, *Noël Coward: A biography* (1995; Chicago, 1998), pp.236, 293, 300; R. Jackson, 'The excitement of being English', in *Look back in pleasure: Noël Coward reconsidered*, J. Kaplan and S. Stowell (eds.), (London, 2000), pp.62-79; see also F. Swinnerton, *The Georgian literary scene: A panorama* (London, 1935), pp.467-9

heroes of the past, such as Cecil Rhodes, of whom William Plomer wrote a critical biography in 1933,<sup>103</sup> even though such interpretations were not always accepted.<sup>104</sup>

Such gloss nevertheless remained firmly in place with regards to others. Gordon is a prime example of this perpetuated myth of imperial heroism. The most famous biography of Gordon to have been passed down from previous generations to us today is that which makes up the closing chapter to Bloomsbury member Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* of 1918. It is a biographical sketch of Gordon as a drunkard gripped with religious fervour, 'a contradictory person – even a little off his head, perhaps, though a hero'.<sup>105</sup> The main focus of Strachey's attack was at imperial acquisitions deemed thoughtless and at those, such as Sir Evelyn Baring, whom Strachey believed to be harnessing the empire for personal gain. What Gordon attempted to do was not 'wrong' in itself; Gordon was merely the wrong person for the job.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, while a minority deemed Strachey's work to be a fair judgement of a man who was undoubtedly an interesting personality but of ephemeral importance,<sup>107</sup> the majority were affronted. Strachey's work was widely taken as a slur upon a great man,<sup>108</sup> and it is therefore unsurprising that breathless biographies of Gordon as the archetypal English hero were reprinted long after they had been written.<sup>109</sup> This perception of the man as a hero harks back to the assertions made by fiction writers such as G. A. Henty who argued that

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<sup>103</sup> W. Plomer, *Cecil Rhodes* (1933; London, 1938)

<sup>104</sup> 'Cecil Rhodes: Two new biographies', in *The Times*, 3 February 1933, p.15

<sup>105</sup> L. Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (1918; Harmondsworth, 1971), p.266

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.189-267; see also M. Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A critical biography* (London, 1967-8), Volume One, pp.50, 163-4; *ibid.*, Volume Two, p.322; Strachey, *Books and characters: French & English* (London, 1922); S. P. Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The early literary history of the Bloomsbury group* (Basingstoke, 1994), Volume Two, pp.117-9

<sup>107</sup> Interestingly, ex-Prime Minister Herbert Asquith fell into this category; 'The Victorian Age: Mr. Asquith's Romanes Lecture', in *The Times*, 10 June 1918, p.10

<sup>108</sup> Holroyd, *Strachey*, Volume Two, p.309; D. May, *Critical times: The history of the Times Literary Supplement* (London, 2001), p.137; B. M. Allen, *Gordon and the Sudan* (London, 1931), *passim*, especially pp.83-101; W. B. K. S., 'Review of *Gordon and the Sudan* by Bernard M. Allen', in *Geographical Journal* 80 (1932), p.78; see also D. H. Johnson, 'The death of Gordon: A Victorian myth', in *Journal of imperial and commonwealth history* 10 (1982), pp.285-310; Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, p.358; K. Martin, *Father figures: A first volume of autobiography 1897-1931* (1966; Harmondsworth, 1969), pp.101-2

<sup>109</sup> W. Butler, *Gordon* (1889; London, 1920)

when Gordon was killed, '[c]ommon sense, humanity, and even economy' favoured a further British involvement in the Sudan.<sup>110</sup>

While it is doubtful that the German scholar Bruno Gutmann would have won over many in Britain to his belief that the advent of the European in Africa acted like a 'poison',<sup>111</sup> the empire was not free from domestic criticism. However, those who put forward the most strident critiques at this time were very much insiders asking for slight reform over extensive change, let alone a dismantling of the system, rather than outsiders such as Gutmann. For example, W. R. Crocker, who had served as an official in Nigeria, attracted interest following the publication of his *Nigeria: A critique of British colonial administration* in 1936. And yet, this was rather a call for a 'hand-to-mouth' system of administration to be replaced with one that enacted principles on a more planned basis, a proposal that British actions were more in line with the theory behind indirect rule, of which he was a keen advocate.<sup>112</sup>

Despite Henry Campbell-Bannerman's expressing alarm to a friend in 1903 at the 'trenchant' nature of J. A. Hobson's writing,<sup>113</sup> the ideas contained in the now-seminal *Imperialism: A study* (1902) were largely ignored. This was, in part, because it was Lenin who did so much in securing the reputation of Hobson. At any rate, the latter writer was little known outside of the liberal *Manchester Guardian* circle.<sup>114</sup> Even then, his 'lack of faith in the ability of Britons to run an empire, and in the possibilities of empire unity' greatly undermined his support among even New Liberal peers.<sup>115</sup> It was only in the increasingly self-critical pessimistic mood of the late-'thirties that Hobson's arguments started to be taken seriously, prompting a third edition of *Imperialism: A study* to be produced in 1938, but even then such newfound acceptance was the preserve of the left.<sup>116</sup> It was only really the communists at this time who publicly objected to what the British were doing with their

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<sup>110</sup> G. A. Henty, *The dash for Khartoum: A tale of the Nile expedition* (1891; London, 1892), p.218

<sup>111</sup> B. Gutmann, 'Aufgaben der gemeinschaft-bildung in Afrika', in *Africa* 1 (1928), pp.429-45, translated summary at pp.511-5

<sup>112</sup> W. R. Crocker, *Nigeria: A critique of British colonial administration* (London, 1936), p.189

<sup>113</sup> H. Campbell-Bannerman to J. Bryce, 26 January 1903, quoted in J. A. Spender, *The life of The Right Hon. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman*, G. C. B. (London, 1923), Volume One, p.87

<sup>114</sup> M. Freedon, 'Introduction', in J. A. Hobson: *A reader*, Freedon (ed.), (London, 1988), p.16

<sup>115</sup> Cain, *Hobson and imperialism: Radicalism, New Liberalism, and finance 1887-1938* (Oxford, 2002), p.164

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.226-33

empire with any sense of vigour and, as was pointed out above, they never wielded any influence except negatively as a threat to be neutralised.<sup>117</sup>

Certain politicians were keen public advocates of the concept of empire as a bastion of 'progress'. For example, in one newspaper article of 1930 the prominent Liberal MP Sir Herbert Samuel wrote that the British public

is intensely proud of the achievements of its sons [i.e. colonial officials] – in redeeming the wilderness, in building cities and towns, roads and railways, in founding universities and schools, in helping hundreds of nations and tribes to share in the ascent of civilisation, in ensuring domestic peace over a quarter of the land area of the earth.<sup>118</sup>

Where problems were felt to emerge, these could, on the basis of Britain's perceived successful track record, be dealt with. Regarding those colonies that had passed from German to British hands after 1918, one writer believed that they 'will have to be carefully and cautiously dealt with, but the success already attained in the older British Colonies shows that our system may be relied on to provide the men and the measures which may be found necessary.'<sup>119</sup> Such ideas were reiterated on a mass scale in school and university textbooks,<sup>120</sup> and by the Conservatives who, using seven tonne cinema vans, made effective use of film, screening works telling of good deeds done in the empire to big crowds in rural areas of Britain.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> For example, see pamphlets produced by the Communist Party of Great Britain, such as T. A. Jackson, *The British Empire* (London, 1922), p.33

<sup>118</sup> H. Samuel, 'Sir Herbert Samuel on the Empire Conference', in *News Chronicle*, 2 October 1930, p.6

<sup>119</sup> M. L. Dawes, 'The late German colonies in Africa', in *The Quarterly Review* 459 (1919), pp.476-7

<sup>120</sup> A. P. Newton and J. Ewing, *The British Empire since 1783: Its political and economic development* (London, 1929)

<sup>121</sup> T. J. Hollins, 'The Conservative Party and film propaganda between the wars', in *English Historical Review* 96 (1981), pp.359-69; R. Low, *The history of the British film 1918-1929* (London, 1971), pp.180, 286-90

A final example of British faith in its empire is provided by the case of Abyssinia. Only a minority would have disagreed with the argument put forward by one article in *The Edinburgh Review* in 1926, which deemed it to be 'clearly impossible' for Abyssinia, and any other country, to exist as an 'independent entity... and to take its place among the nations of the world... unless it is prepared to advance along modern lines'.<sup>122</sup> Abyssinia was, it was believed, in stark need of reform.<sup>123</sup> However, this did not prevent the widespread condemnation of Mussolini's actions by the British press when Italian troops commenced military operations in Abyssinia in October 1935. The majority of letters sent to MPs at the end of June and the start of July 1936 called for the British government to pursue a stronger line against Italy than London was deemed to be taking.<sup>124</sup> This was a point of view that some prominent imperialists, such as William Ormsby-Gore, Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1936 until 1938, put across unequivocally to Baldwin in correspondence throughout 1935.<sup>125</sup> One Christian commentator, the Reverend A. Herbert Rees, argued that it would be a 'cruel irony if at the moment when there seemed hope of renewed contact with the enlightened Christian world... [Abyssinia] should fall prey to the rapacity of a professedly Christian nation'.<sup>126</sup>

Nevertheless, there was divergence on this. Before the event some believed that the country was not as important as Europe and therefore should not unduly worry the wider world, while some believed that, in the words of *The Morning Post* editor Howell Gwynne, Abyssinia was already as good as fallen and that Britain had 'lost Mussolini's good will and, if we are to regain it we should, if opportunity is offered us meet him with generosity and a

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<sup>122</sup> C. F. Rey, 'Abyssinia: Past and present', in *The Edinburgh review* 244 (1926), p.289

<sup>123</sup> G. E. Underhill, 'Abyssinia under Menelik and after', in *The quarterly review* 470 (1922), p.52; see also B. Zewde, *A history of modern Ethiopia 1855-1974* (London, 1991), p.92, 162

<sup>124</sup> For example, see N. Astor papers, RUL MS 1416/1/1/1235

<sup>125</sup> W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore to S. Baldwin, 8 September 1935, Baldwin Papers 123/213-6

<sup>126</sup> A. H. Rees, 'Ethiopia and her church', in *The East and west review* 2 (1936), p.29. Some also believed that Mussolini was increasingly inaccurate to deem Abyssinia as backward, for Haile Selassie was a man that some now believed could 'entirely transform this old highland realm', having already shown himself to be a 'proven administrator'; I. Phayre, 'Mussolini's 'masterwork' in Africa', in *The quarterly review* 525 (1935), p.90; Phayre, 'Suppression of slavery in Abyssinia', in *The quarterly review* 526 (1935), pp.308-26

determination to let “bygones be bygones”.<sup>127</sup> At any rate, when Italian attempts at empire-building were condemned, this was not on the basis that to spread civilization was wrong, but that Italy was the wrong power to do so. This was because it was felt that Mussolini was only involved in Africa out of self-interest. British activities in themselves were not concomitantly brought into question – Italy’s interests in taking foreign territories did not pose any uncomfortable questions for the British as to their own aims and purposes in Africa. Where the Italians did prove worrying was in their impeding the ability of the British to act in accordance with their own wishes, rather than in their undermining the validity of imperialism per se.

A look at the relationship between fictive and non-fictive discussions of civilization can now take place. This is of necessity, given that some literary critics speak of fiction as mirroring a wider British interwar anxiety. Peter Widdowson argues that one of the key features of fiction in the ‘thirties was that it displayed an ‘uncertainty of direction’ in keeping with wider social fears of the age, a constant ambiguity that renders it difficult to draw any conclusions from interwar fiction.<sup>128</sup> However, Widdowson’s claims are drawn from an examination of Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Graham Greene, and the Marxists Edward Upward, Rex Warner and Christopher Isherwood. Similarly, Douglas Hewitt sees in the fiction of the ‘twenties a development of the ‘concept of a vanished golden age’, simultaneously depicting a modern proletariat ‘progressively debased by industrial changes and the machinations of greedy newspaper magnates and the pulp fiction industry’; for proof of this Hewitt only looks at T. S. Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, and literary critic Q. D. Leavis.<sup>129</sup> But in fact, such authors were then marginal in terms of the cultural influence they wielded. Prior to 1939 Orwell’s works sold very poorly indeed which, as will be demonstrated below, was also the case with regards to other highbrows.<sup>130</sup> At any rate, on the rare occasions that these authors were

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<sup>127</sup> H. A. Gwynne to Baldwin, 13 September 1935, Baldwin Papers 123/219-20

<sup>128</sup> P. Widdowson, ‘Between the acts?: English fiction in the thirties’, in J. Clark, M. Heinemann, D. Margolies and C. Snee (eds.), *Culture and crisis in Britain in the 1930s* (London, 1979), pp.134-5

<sup>129</sup> D. Hewitt, *English fiction of the early modern period 1890-1940* (London, 1988), p.167

<sup>130</sup> J. Hunter, ‘Orwell, Wells and *Coming up for air*’, in *Modern philology* 78 (1980), p.38

examined by their peers, such examinations often led to very different opinions to those drawn by modern-day literary analysts.

However, it is necessary to avoid falling into the trap of assuming that all non-modernists who are popular today enjoyed a similar status in their own day. For example, significant critical and public acclaim for Evelyn Waugh only came in the wake of 1945's *Brideshead Revisited*. The *Times Literary Supplement* completely ignored *Vile bodies* (1930) as a work to review, and when Chapman & Hall advertised the same novel in the *TLS*, it was described as 'Vile bodies by ALEC WAUGH', one of the publishing firm's employees assuming any work by a Waugh to be that of Evelyn's popular brother.<sup>131</sup> Any analysis of the influence of novels must not take an audience for granted.

Interwar British fiction, as the overwhelming majority of middle-class readers experienced it, did not bombard audiences with apocalyptic forebodings, or even profound pessimism, as to the future of England. Even those novels now deemed a testament to the shaky hold of modernity over the world, such as those by H. G. Wells, were then seen as a validation of the strength of Western, and more specifically British, civilization. This point has obvious ramifications for the present consideration of British perceptions as to the 'correctness' of British institutions. In the face of any minor setbacks, it was felt, Britain would prevail.

This was not the type of sentiment that was endorsed by T. S. Eliot. Robert Crawford has convincingly argued that Eliot had an ambivalent attitude towards the primitive, and that the American's anti-homage to London, *The waste land* (1922), presents 'a world where fertility, renewing painful life is inescapable... Tortured between the city and the savage, Eliot's was a nightmare world' that leaves its readers in darkness as to anything other than the futility of existence.<sup>132</sup> However, although he is now widely deemed one of the most important poets of

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<sup>131</sup> May, *Critical times*, p.168

<sup>132</sup> R. Crawford, *The savage and the city of T. S. Eliot* (Oxford, 1987), passim, especially pp.76, 137, 148-9, quote at p.149; see also T. S. Eliot, 'The waste land', in *The waste land and other poems* (London, 1999), especially 'I. The burial of the dead', (pp.23-5); 'III. The fire sermon', (pp.30-4); and 'V. What the thunder said', (pp.36-9). For more on Eliot's ideas about others, see M. Wilk, *Jewish presence in T. S. Eliot and Franz Kafka* (Atlanta, 1986). Even some intellectuals, upon reading the work, condemned it as morally indecent; see entry for 28 May 1926, in *The diaries of A. L. Rowse*, R. Ollard (ed.), (London, 2003), p.23



the twentieth century,<sup>133</sup> in the interwar years Eliot was virtually unknown. His work hardly impacted upon the world outside avant-garde circles, and even accomplished readers found it incomprehensible.<sup>134</sup> When he was noticed, it was predominantly as a reviewer of other people's poetry.<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Stephen Heath is putting it mildly when he declares ruralist modernist Mary Butts' *Armed with madness* has an 'underlying disquiet about it';<sup>136</sup> for the work's main character Scylla Taverner 'everywhere there was a sense of broken continuity, a dis-ease', and the work does not do anything to undermine this assumption.<sup>137</sup> But, as even *The Bookman's* editor Hugh Ross Williamson, one of Butts' most loyal supporters, made plain, the novel was so difficult to understand that 'it was almost a despair to her admirers'.<sup>138</sup> Then, as now, the novel is a hard-to-find and largely ignored work.

D. H. Lawrence was, by contrast, a modernist whose works were better known,<sup>139</sup> but even he did not contribute to a change in people's perceptions of the wider world. There were three reasons for this. Firstly, certain works that Lawrence wrote, such as his collection of short stories *The woman who rode away*, were considered incomprehensible by most in the interwar period.<sup>140</sup> Secondly, some – *Sons and lovers*, *The rainbow*, *Women in love* and *Lady Chatterley's lover* – were deemed obscene and condemned for their frank depiction of sexual

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<sup>133</sup> For example, A. D. Moody, 'Preface', in *The Cambridge companion to T. S. Eliot*, Moody (ed.), (Cambridge, 1994), p.vi

<sup>134</sup> L. Gordon, *T. S. Eliot: An imperfect life* (London, 1998), pp.194-5. Continental modernist authors such as Drieu La Rochelle, a depressed romantic modernist whose apocalyptic worldview shared much with the visions of both *Ulysses* and *The waste land*, had virtually no impact upon Britain at this time; R. D. Reck, *Drieu La Rochelle and the picture gallery novel: French modernism in the interwar years* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1990), passim, especially pp.6, 51-2, 81

<sup>135</sup> May, *Critical times*, pp.124-9, 195

<sup>136</sup> S. Heath, 'Introduction: Chances of the sacred game', in M. Butts, *Armed With Madness* (1928; London, 2001), p.vii

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, passim, quote at p.9

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Heath, 'Introduction', in *ibid.*, p.xii

<sup>139</sup> Lawrence certainly crept into mainstream cultural discussions; see, for example, N. Marsh, *Artists in crime* (1938; London, 2000), p.282

<sup>140</sup> 'June Magazines: Two new reviews', in *The Times*, 2 June 1923, p.10; 'New novels', in *The Times*, 25 May 1928, p.9; 'As we are: Mr. E. F. Benson's revue', in *The Times*, 21 October 1932, p.8

activity, or even unreleased in unabridged format until after the interwar period.<sup>141</sup> Thirdly, others such as *The lovely lady* were felt to be pleasant works full of beautiful prose, with plenty to say on the nature of the human condition, but were not read as the negative, primitivist ruminations on the human condition and rejections of modernity that some now take them to be.<sup>142</sup> In this, Lawrence's reception was similar to that of Aldous Huxley.<sup>143</sup>

It is the fiction that H. G. Wells produced before the First World War, works such as *The time machine*, *Tono-Bungay* and *The invisible man* that lives with us today. Later on in his writing career, Wells increasingly used his novels to outline his plans for a utopian world state. Contemporary critics felt this course ruined his evident talent as a storyteller.<sup>144</sup> As Wells increasingly sought 'liberal' ends by distinctly authoritarian means, bestowing lists of rules upon his readers,<sup>145</sup> his popularity as an author of fiction was dented, especially among

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<sup>141</sup> *Lady Chatterley's lover* was unavailable in unexpurgated form in Great Britain until Penguin Books' famous court case in 1960.

<sup>142</sup> 'Fiction: Mr. Wells's new novel', in *The Times*, 20 January 1933, p.7. In addition, modern academics, unlike those at the time, tend to see primitivism as an important part of Lawrence's work; see D. Gutierrez, 'The ancient imagination of D. H. Lawrence', in *Twentieth century literature* 27 (1981), p.178. Two excellent articles on Lawrence, race and primitivism are B. Neilson, 'D. H. Lawrence's 'Dark Page': Narrative primitivism in *Women in love* and *The plumed serpent*', in *Twentieth-century literature* (1997), pp.310-25; R. Granofsky, "'Jews of the wrong sort": D. H. Lawrence and race', in *Journal of modern literature* 23 (1999), pp.209-23. See also R. L. Caserio, *The novel in England, 1900-1950: History and theory* (New York, 1999), p.61

<sup>143</sup> The dystopia of *Brave new world*, with its mass indoctrinations, fetishised industrialism, factory-grown people and pseudo-Fordian renunciation of the past, is now seen as a vociferous, even primitivistic, denunciation of the way in which its author deemed society was headed. However, the minority who read the work at the time, as both later testimonies and contemporaneous reviews reveal, did not draw such far-reaching implications from the work, invariably marvelling instead at the novel's 'intellectual agility' or sense of 'fun', while the satirical aspect now seen was then unseen; A. Huxley, *Brave new world* (1932; London, 2001); C. M. Holmes, *Aldous Huxley and the way to reality* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1970), pp.83, 87; see also N. Murray, *Aldous Huxley: An English intellectual* (London, 2002), p.173; G. Woodcock, *Dawn and the darkest hour: A study of Aldous Huxley* (London, 1972), p.14; May, *Critical times*, p.199

<sup>144</sup> 'New novels: Mr. Wells's thesis', in *The Times*, 11 May 1922, p.16. For a slightly more sympathetic, if nonetheless exasperated, reading of Wells, see 'Review of *Men like Gods*', in *The Times*, 9 March 1923, p.8; see also 'New novels: 'The autocracy of Mr. Parham'', in *The Times*, 22 July 1930, p.19. For evidence of this utopianist aim, see, for example, H. G. Wells, *Men like gods* (London, 1923), pp.289-90, 302-3

<sup>145</sup> P. Coupland, 'H. G. Wells's 'Liberal Fascism'', in *Journal of contemporary history* 35 (2000), p.542

the younger generation.<sup>146</sup> Nonetheless, some read his later works, and his earlier novels continued to be held in high esteem by many.

Certain scholars today see Wells as deeply pessimistic about the future, a man convinced that civilization was doomed to oblivion. Patrick Parrinder uses the example of *The war in the air* (1908) as proof of this. The novel is deemed to forecast a 'new dark age', as man seeks to destroy man with new tools such as aeroplanes.<sup>147</sup> But the book is written from the vantage point of a narrator living in a civilised and scientific future, and concludes with a world decimated by conflict gradually starting to build towards this future.<sup>148</sup> Thus it all ends on a positive note, with war merely one stage on the path to utopia. Similarly, *The history of Mr. Polly* (1910) tells the tale of a man who, depressed with his life as a shop-keeper, attempts suicide. Failing, he has a revelation that everything in life is open to him should he wish, that there 'is only one sort of man who is to absolutely blame for his own misery, and that is the man who finds life dull and dreary.'<sup>149</sup> Consequently, Wells' peers took the work as an affirmation of life and a delightful comedy.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, rather than being seen as a 'direct warning about the disastrous potential of class division' and a source of 'irreconcilable conflicts',<sup>151</sup> to the interwar commentator *The time machine* (1895) was merely a great piece of fantastical fiction.<sup>152</sup> Rather than being a denunciation of modernity and science, *The invisible man* (1897) was instead a call for science to be informed by a common sense that cannot be reduced to formulae.<sup>153</sup> Jack Williamson has argued that Wells was a man deeply suspicious of change, 'always doubtful of any ultimate goodness in reason or science, darkly skeptical

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<sup>146</sup> R. Bloom, *Anatomies of egotism: A reading of the last novels of H. G. Wells* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1977), pp.4-5

<sup>147</sup> P. Parrinder, *Shadows of the future: H. G. Wells, science fiction and prophecy* (Liverpool, 1995), p.79

<sup>148</sup> Wells, *The war in the air: And particularly how Mr Bert Smallways fared while it lasted* (1908; Thirsk, 2002), pp.303-7, 325-41

<sup>149</sup> Wells, *The history of Mr. Polly* (1910; Harmondsworth, 1946), p.177

<sup>150</sup> For example, 'Books for the holidays', in *The Times*, 28 July 1933, p.8

<sup>151</sup> J. Huntingdon, *The logic of fantasy: H. G. Wells and science fiction* (New York, 1982), p.41

<sup>152</sup> 'Mr. Wells's new story: Fantasy and realism', in *The Times*, 31 August 1928, p.6

<sup>153</sup> Wells, *The invisible man* (1897; Harmondsworth, 1946); see also "'The invisible man": A film of Mr. H. G. Wells's story', in *The Times*, 25 January 1934, p.8

[sic] of any moral or human values resulting from progress'.<sup>154</sup> But Wells was then seen as a keen advocate of scientific discovery.<sup>155</sup>

*The croquet player* of 1936 certainly seems to confirm John Partington's thesis that though partly depressed about the state of man, Wells did not write off civilization; social malaise was conquerable.<sup>156</sup> In this there is a direct link with his writings of the late 1890s.<sup>157</sup> All of this led to a sense of optimism, not of pessimism, which fed into his beliefs of empire. Writing in his autobiography *The new Machiavelli* in 1911, Wells stated that he was

no believer in the imminent dissolution of our Empire; I am less and less inclined to see in either India or Germany the probability of an abrupt truncation of those slow intellectual constructions which are the essentials of statecraft.<sup>158</sup>

However, once he had conclusively moved towards the ideas that imperialism and internationalism were antagonistic, he supported the empire only insofar as it advanced the cause of world government.

Some pitch bestseller John Galsworthy, author of the *Forsythe saga*, as an anti-imperialist, because of his play *The Forest* (1924), in which a millionaire decides the fate of an African territory for his own purposes.<sup>159</sup> However, Galsworthy was attacking a particular type of imperialist adventure rather than imperialism as a system. If it were otherwise, it is difficult

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<sup>154</sup> J. Williamson, *H. G. Wells: Critic of progress* (Baltimore, 1973), p.7, see also p.136

<sup>155</sup> 'Neglected science', in *The Times*, 1 May 1919, p.10; 'Imperial college of science', in *The Times*, 3 June 1920, p.11; 'Books of the week', in *The Times*, 24 May 1921, p.13; see also R. L. Stevenson, *The strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886; London, 1994). With regards to *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896), see M. R. Hillegas, *The future as nightmare: H. G. Wells and the anti-utopians* (New York, 1967), p.36; B. Ash, *Faces of the future: The lessons of science fiction* (London, 1975), p.53

<sup>156</sup> Wells, *The croquet player* (1936; Nottingham, 1998); J. S. Partington, *Building cosmopolis: The political thought of H. G. Wells* (Aldershot, 2003), pp.179-81

<sup>157</sup> R. M. Philmus and D. Y. Hughes, *H. G. Wells: Early writings in science and science fiction* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1975), p.185

<sup>158</sup> Wells, *The new Machiavelli* (1911; Harmondsworth, 1946), p.259

<sup>159</sup> J. Gindin, *John Galsworthy's life and art* (Basingstoke, 1987), pp.491-2. The theatre critic from *The Times* found the play difficult to follow in places; 'St. Martin's theatre: 'The Forest' by John Galsworthy', in *The Times*, 7 March 1924, p.10

to see how he could have called for 'young people of modest condition' to settle Britain's overseas territories or for some sort of imperial self-sufficiency to be reached via a rejection of Free Trade.<sup>160</sup> Here, imperialism was underpinned by confidence. Britain was doing just fine, Galsworthy was saying. In the preface to *The modern comedy*, published between 1924 and 1929, Galsworthy argued that there

never was a country whose real deterioration of human fibre had less chance than in this island, because there is no other country whose climate is so changeable, so tempering to character, so formative to grit, and so basically healthy.<sup>161</sup>

Such a faith in the persistence of civility cut across the political divide. Though never a doctrinaire socialist, J. B. Priestley was dedicated to the notion of society as a unified whole, free from alienation and predicated on the guiding principle that man cannot live for himself alone.<sup>162</sup> His first major success, the bestselling *The good companions* (1929), tells of social solidarity, with a working-class man from the fictional city of Bruddersford, (a thinly-veiled Bradford), a caddish ex-teacher, and a daughter of a rich colonel becoming the closest of friends and working together for a theatre company.<sup>163</sup> Life is not perfect, but all will come right in the end.<sup>164</sup> In summing up the work, *The Times* declared that "'Jolly" is the only epithet'.<sup>165</sup> Priestley's subsequent novel, *Angel Pavement* (1930), was similar in tone.<sup>166</sup>

Another left-winger who enjoyed interwar popularity was George Bernard Shaw. Primarily known then as a writer of what were taken to be light-hearted plays such as *Pygmalion*, some now believe Shaw was a man who sought to destabilise mainstream views on race and

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<sup>160</sup> A. Fréchet, *John Galsworthy: A reassessment*, D. Mahaffey (trans.), (1979; London, 1982), p.183

<sup>161</sup> Quoted in R. Colenutt, 'The world of Mr. Galsworthy's fiction', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 149 (1934), p.63

<sup>162</sup> J. Braine, *J. B. Priestley* (London, 1978), p.3

<sup>163</sup> J. B. Priestley, *The good companions* (1929; London, 1931), passim

<sup>164</sup> For example, *ibid.*, pp.3, 40, 450, 640; see also Braine, *Priestley*, p.28

<sup>165</sup> 'Books of the day', in *The Times*, 30 July 1929, p.8

<sup>166</sup> V. Brome, *J. B. Priestley* (London, 1988), p.133; which contradicts Braine, *Priestley*, pp.40-1

empire, a natural line of argument given that ambiguity and uncertainty are seen by some as having underpinned his entire world view.<sup>167</sup> However, where some modern academics read *Heartbreak House* (1919) as a call for the dismantling of empire, contemporary critics did not, primarily because they found it difficult to understand what Shaw was actually trying to say.<sup>168</sup> Tracy Davis seems to suggest that the work's avoidance of any explicit call for the end of empire was, on Shaw's part, the consequence of a temporary and relative sense of optimism engendered by the impending establishment of a League of Nations.<sup>169</sup> In fact, there seems to be much elsewhere in Shaw's fictional work to support imperialist endeavours.<sup>170</sup> This is unsurprising if Shaw's political writings are considered, in which he made his support for empire clear.<sup>171</sup> Shaw certainly called for imperial reform, and criticised missionaries for what they were doing in Africa,<sup>172</sup> but in pitching Shaw as a man ahead of his times, modern critics have read his calls for greater democratic accountability in the colonies as demands for the entire system's abolition.

What of those British characters who involve themselves abroad? Confidence as expressed in novels compounded a sense that the British were able to surmount all difficulties that foreigners threw at them. In works of fiction there is a healthy pedigree to this that stretches back to Anthony Hope's *The prisoner of Zenda* and beyond.<sup>173</sup> Agatha Christie's works were read 'in order to purchase at the cost of a minor and passing disturbance the comfort of knowing that the disturbance was *contained*, and that at the end of the story the world they

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<sup>167</sup> R. F. Whitman, *Shaw and the play of ideas* (Ithaca, New York, 1977), p.23; M. S. Saunders, 'From metropolis to "Impossible edges": Shaw's imperial abjects', in *Shaw: The annual of Bernard Shaw studies* 22 (2001), p.102

<sup>168</sup> 'Heartbreak House: Mr. Shaw's play at the Court Theatre', in *The Times*, 19 October 1921, p.8; see also S. Weintraub, 'Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?: Virginia and G.B.S.', in *Shaw* 21 (2001), p.48

<sup>169</sup> T. C. Davis, 'Shaw's interstices of empire: Decolonizing at home and abroad', in *The Cambridge companion to George Bernard Shaw*, C. Innes (ed), (Cambridge, 1998), p.227

<sup>170</sup> For example, with regards to *Man and superman* (1902), see C. Wilson, *Bernard Shaw: A reassessment* (1969; London, 1981), pp.245-6

<sup>171</sup> Fabian Society, *Fabianism and the empire: A manifesto by the Fabian Society*, G. B. Shaw (ed.), (1900; Boston, 2004), p.21

<sup>172</sup> 'The black girl in search of God', in Shaw, *The black girl in search of God and some lesser tales* (London, 1934), pp.21-72; see also Shaw to Astor, 15 April 1932, RUL MS 1416/1/4/90; Shaw to Astor, 25 August 1933, RUL MS 1416/1/4/90

<sup>173</sup> A. Hope, *The prisoner of Zenda* (1894; Oxford, 1994); see also J. H. Vahey, 'The word of an Englishman', in *The Cornhill magazine* 50 (1921), pp.195-205

imagined would be continued in its innocence and familiarity'.<sup>174</sup> Given this conservative remit, it is therefore unsurprising that the empire is portrayed as being ruled over and inhabited by Britons who are, on the whole, of good character. As *Magnolia Bay* and *The secret of chimneys* made perfectly clear, Christie felt Africa could be home to ordinary, hard-working whites.<sup>175</sup> Two big-game hunters, Hector Blunt in *The murder of Roger Ackroyd* and Porter in *The mysterious Mr. Quin*, are portrayed as people who feel uncomfortable integrating themselves into upper-middle-class and upper-class social situations, but they are nevertheless decent chaps.<sup>176</sup> Those who deal with Africa, conveniently on hand to tell of indigenous poisoning techniques, are usually intelligent.<sup>177</sup> Englishmen would return from the tropics changed for the better, as long as they did not let the heat get to them or stay there for too long.<sup>178</sup>

For Christie, the worst sort of people were those who attempted to undermine the stability of the British Empire, such as the shadowy Dr. Richetti in *Death on the Nile*, who is, unsurprisingly enough, a racial 'mongrel' of at least Irish, French and American descent.<sup>179</sup> Such subversives never won. The empire would remain safe; furthermore, the British were to be proud of what they achieved imperially and, though they could only raise Africans by a certain rate and to a certain degree, they should do so.<sup>180</sup> This ties in with Christie's wider views; *The secret of chimneys'* hero tells how democracy needs to be forced upon people, a struggle that will end successfully, but only after a long process of social evolution.<sup>181</sup> A sense

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<sup>174</sup> D. I. Grossvogel, 'Death deferred: The long life, splendid afterlife and mysterious workings of Agatha Christie', in *Essays on detective fiction*, B. Benstock (ed.), (London, 1983), p.4, emphasis in original.

<sup>175</sup> Christie, 'Magnolia blossom', in *Problem at Pollensa Bay and other stories* (1991; London, 1994), pp.205-27; Christie, *The secret of Chimneys* (1925; London, 1956), passim, especially p.17. Such men found Britain less exciting than Africa; Christie, *Parker Pyne investigates* (1934; London, 2002), pp.22-39

<sup>176</sup> Christie, *Roger Ackroyd*, p.86; Christie, *The mysterious Mr Quin* (1930; London, 1973), p.30

<sup>177</sup> Christie, *Cards*, p.21

<sup>178</sup> Christie, *The Listerdale mystery* (1934; London, 1970), p.94

<sup>179</sup> Christie, *Nile*, pp.102, 234-5; see also Christie, *Listerdale*, p.9

<sup>180</sup> On Christie's support for the British Empire see, for example, J. Cade, *Agatha Christie and the eleven missing days* (London, 1998), p.36

<sup>181</sup> Christie, *Chimneys*, pp.216-7

of British success against foreign values was not confined to fiction; it was a prominent theme of much of the cinema of the period.<sup>182</sup>

For the fiction writers of the interwar period, Britain should attempt to alter the world. This would seem to be undermined by the American character Miss Adams, the assimilationist busybody in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The tragedy of the Korosko* who sets upon the 'self-imposed task of bringing the East up to the standards of Massachusetts' as soon as she arrives in Africa.<sup>183</sup> The naïve female reformer has a long cultural pedigree that stretches back to Mrs Jellyby in Dickens' *Bleak house* and Mrs Proudie in Trollope's *Framley parsonage*.<sup>184</sup> However, it is the manner in which these women go about their missions, rather than the missions in themselves, which are criticised. Miss Adams, for example, is a source of 'sympathetic amusement' rather than ridicule. The 'civilizing mission' was to continue.<sup>185</sup>

It is unsurprising that T. S. Eliot felt cornered by the perceptions of the majority.<sup>186</sup> In contrast with the popular fiction of the period, highbrow works were pessimistic in nature about the ability of Britain to survive in the modern world. Some even revelled in the thought of an anticipated anarchistic collapse with relish. Such works, however, had little impact at the time. While some such as W. H. Auden were proclaiming in little-read journals that the 'truths' about the 'real values which our culture promotes' were not 'particularly cheering',<sup>187</sup> writers of middle- and low-brow works were overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of Western civilization, and were correspondingly sure of its superiority over other societies. This is not to say that this latter group of authors deemed all facets of Western modernity to

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<sup>182</sup> For example, A. Hitchcock (dir.), *The man who knew too much* (1934); Hitchcock (dir.), *The 39 steps* (1935); Hitchcock (dir.), *The lady vanishes* (1938)

<sup>183</sup> A. Conan Doyle, *The tragedy of the Korosko* (1898; London, 1934), p.8

<sup>184</sup> C. Dickens, *Bleak house* (1852-3; London, 1994), pp.31, 388, 588, 627-8, 806; A. Trollope, *Framley Parsonage* (1861; London, 1978), pp.68-71; see also 'An African adventurer', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 58 (1925), pp.239-46; S. Gibbons, *Cold comfort farm* (1932; London, 1938), p.12

<sup>185</sup> With regards to the 'civilizing effort', see also J. D. Coates, *The day's work: Kipling and the idea of sacrifice* (Madison, NJ, 1997), passim, especially pp.15-6; R. Kipling, 'The sea-wife' (1893), in *Collected verse of Rudyard Kipling* (1911; Whitefish, MT, 2005), pp.11-2; this contradicts Z. T. Sullivan, *Narratives of empire: The fictions of Rudyard Kipling* (Cambridge, 1993)

<sup>186</sup> Eliot, 'A commentary', in *The criterion* 11 (1924), p.233, quoted in Monk, *Bertrand Russell: Ghost of madness*, p.32

<sup>187</sup> W. H. Auden, 'The noble savage', in *The complete works of W. H. Auden: Plays and other dramatic writings, 1928-1938*, E. Mendelson (ed.), (London, 1989), p.473



be perfect, but that the lack of faith in a Whiggish progress imputed to interwar authors by some modern scholars, which has been derived from a re-reading of high-brow fiction, is detached from the normative belief systems omnipresent in the majority of interwar works. The world constructed for, presented to, and consumed by the interwar upper-middle class was, by and large, an optimistic one, in which minor problems that arose could be overcome. Faith in the British system as represented in fictional narrative prevailed; British civilization was worth exporting to the world.

This literature reflected a wider faith in Britain that some today believe died in the trenches. The British middle classes, and especially those at the upper end of this grouping, were, for the vast bulk of the interwar years, happy with their lot.<sup>188</sup> Such a sense of confidence is understandable, because of an enduring perception of the British economy as pre-eminent, and a faith in the enduring ability of Britain's political system. This self-belief extended to a feeling of surety when it came to Britain's standing in the world with regards to her empire, and to a confidence that what Britain was doing abroad was the right thing. While it is perhaps natural that one writer for the journal *The Round Table* could argue in 1923 that 'so far from showing signs either of decay or ossification', the empire was 'manifesting an extraordinary vitality and flexibility',<sup>189</sup> this was not merely the opinion of those whose working days were mostly concerned with empire. These commentators will be returned to when the question of development is tackled in chapter three. What is now required, however, is an analysis of interwar metropolitan ideas about race and Africa.

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<sup>188</sup> This sense of contentment annoyed highbrows. In 1932 the editors of Cambridge-based literary and political journal *Scrutiny* were appalled by the fact that for the 'majority neither the present drift of civilization nor the plight of the arts is a matter for much concern' 'Scrutiny: A manifesto', in *Scrutiny* 1 (1932), pp.4-5

<sup>189</sup> 'The new imperial problem', in *The Round Table* 51 (1923), p.478; see also 'King and Empire' in *The Round Table* 102 (1936), p.220

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## Race, the modernists and the mainstream

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Some have argued that interwar Britons were deeply ambivalent about how far 'race' determined human personality and innate ability. For instance, Gavin Schaffer claims that scientific opinion on the matter was 'divided, confused and dominated by ideological conflict',<sup>1</sup> part of a wider growing sense of uncertainty borne, in certain circles, of intercultural personal relationships, which generated ambiguous responses to traditional racist ideas.<sup>2</sup> This coincides with those postcolonial claims already discussed, that the British did not know where 'us' ended and 'them' began, or where the line between the two of them should exist in the future. The present chapter will examine the content of both non-fiction and fiction. Interwar fiction has been subject to a great deal of historical revisionism in recent years. Some have tried to refute established ideas about popular writers such as Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie and John Buchan, going as far as to suggest that they were not racist or, at least, that the extent to which they were has been greatly exaggerated. Attempting to depict their subjects as somehow closer in sentiment to the majority today than to the interwar 'norm', the conclusions of such literary historians and of those who stress racial uncertainty in general will be demonstrated to be lacking. Instead, it will be argued that in the interwar period, though there was a growing sense that social factors had a role in determining the nature of a given people, racial characteristics continued to predominate. While interwar Britons felt that other peoples could become more like Europeans in certain

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<sup>1</sup> G. Schaffer, "'Like a baby with a box of matches': British scientists and the concept of 'race' in the inter-war period", in *British journal for the history of science* 38 (2005), p.323

<sup>2</sup> For instance, see P. H. Hansen, 'Tenzing's two wrist-watches: The conquest of Everest and late imperial culture in Britain 1921-1953', in *Past and present* 157 (1997), pp.164-5

regards, there were clear limits to this. Race remained an established social 'truth' until World War Two.

All of this is worth analysing at length, especially because postcolonialist claims have yet to be subjected to rigorous analysis. Furthermore, revisionist claims about race are highly significant in a wider imperial context. For instance, it has been alleged that a reduced emphasis upon race as a factor in explaining human nature in Buchan's novels led to his explicitly arguing that the hold of Western civilization over the world was only ever tentative.<sup>3</sup> If this were true, this could have conceivably engendered uncertainties among readers regarding the strength of Britain's claim to 'look after' other peoples. On the contrary; Buchan felt that the empire was strong by dint of Britain's enduring racial supremacy. Disturbances against Britain were exciting but temporary.

Thus, though fictional representations of empire have already been examined, the ramifications of racial ideas for certain writers' conceptions of Africa will be examined here as a means of elaborating upon the interrelationship between the two more closely. This is of particular importance given that for some scholars, fiction reveals the truth beneath the surface facade of everyday life. With respect to early twentieth-century fiction, this truth was one of the fractures running throughout the ideological foundations of empire. For Bhabha, Conrad displays 'the fragile margins of the concepts of Western civility and cultural community put under colonial stress... Such a discursive ambivalence at the very heart of the issue of honour and duty in the colonial service represents the liminality, if not the end, of the masculinist, heroic ideal... of a healthy imperial Englishness'.<sup>4</sup> For Adam Lively, below the tub-thumping of the boys' own magazines' discussions of Africa there lay a 'profound pessimism and a fear that, transported into the reality of the primitive, European civilisation will "go native", partaking of the chaos that surrounds it. The empire... is already beginning to strike back'.<sup>5</sup> Such claims obviously represent a serious challenge to the findings of chapter one, and another key reason for why works of fiction will receive a substantial amount of

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<sup>3</sup> D. Daniell, *The interpreter's house: A critical assessment of John Buchan* (London, 1975), p.208

<sup>4</sup> Bhabha, *Location of culture*, p.174, see also pp.123-5

<sup>5</sup> Lively, *Masks*, p.127

attention here. Even if interwar Britain was more buoyant than many historians have hitherto argued, there remains the claim that there was a discomfiting disjuncture between the manner in which contemporary events were depicted in non-fiction and fiction sources, with the latter providing a source of inescapable, nagging middle-class anxiety about the state of the empire. “‘Unbearable pessimism’ does not sell books’,<sup>6</sup> but were ‘negative’ works unpopular because they ran counter to most people’s approaches to life, or because the public did not want to confront that which they felt, at the back of their minds, might be true? As discussed briefly already, it is not contested that many avant-garde and modernist writers of the period avoided putting forward simple messages. For such writers there were often no answers, no easy morals that readers could take away with them and apply to an exterior reality. But, for a variety of reasons, James Joyce, the Bloomsbury set and others who occasionally put forward uncomfortable ideas about race and empire were not endorsed. Conrad was popular, but viewed in a very different light to that in which some now see him. It is only an analysis of contemporary critical responses to the works that can reveal this, which is curiously lacking in the overwhelming majority of studies concerning themselves with the relationship between interwar cultural works and the wider British society into which they were released. They reveal that audiences felt those representations of racial matters within the empire that most accurately reflected reality were those that complemented their vision of British global pre-eminence.

To turn first to the non-fictional world, in the interwar period there was a rise in the belief that environmental and cultural factors determined some societal attributes,<sup>7</sup> while the eugenics movement became increasingly discredited during the period.<sup>8</sup> This was a continuance of a pre-war change, whereby race was not as fervent an issue as had been the case in the late nineteenth century. This is demonstrated by the shift in tone of boys’ magazines between the 1890s and 1914 from the need to keep the younger generation ‘pure’

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<sup>6</sup> C. Bloom, *Bestsellers: Popular fiction since 1900* (Basingstoke, 2002), p.96

<sup>7</sup> E. Barkan, *The retreat of scientific racism: Changing concepts of race in Britain and the United States between the world wars* (Cambridge, 1992), pp.23-34, 65, 138-40, 286, 308, 318

<sup>8</sup> D. Stone, *Breeding superman: Nietzsche, race and eugenics in Edwardian and interwar Britain* (Liverpool, 2002), p.93

and mainly to a concern for patriotism and good citizenship.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there was a limited degree of uncertainty in the public arena as to the importance to be attached to the nurture side of the debate. However, that racial heredity accounted for a majority of human aspects, both physical and mental, never ceased to be a biological 'fact' for the majority. People were still racist. All that occurred was that the 'distance' between blacks and whites as expounded in the sorts of works that the middle classes read was deemed to be less than had previously been believed. But the difference still existed. In an article for *Africa* Richard Oliver claimed that the intelligence of the African

like that of Europeans, varies over a wide range; and some Africans would probably be found at all, or nearly all points on the scale of educability... [however the] distribution would be displaced somewhat towards the lower end of the scale.<sup>10</sup>

Most intellectuals agreed that racial characteristics were of prime importance in understanding why Africans were of 'lower intelligence' than Europeans.<sup>11</sup>

But it is also necessary to look at a couple of non-academic examples. Major Alexander Pott served in the Egyptian army in the Sudan between 1914 and 1921 and produced a modestly popular work about his experiences, *People of the book*, which was a collection of articles that had already been published, predominantly in *Blackwood's* and *The national review*.<sup>12</sup> He believed that Sudanese 'dervishes' captured from the deposed Sultan of Darfur Ali Dinar's personal army were, in a remarkably short space of time, capable of becoming disciplined

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<sup>9</sup> R. H. Macdonald, 'Reproducing the middle-class boy: From purity to patriotism in the boys' magazines, 1892-1914', in *Journal of contemporary history* 24 (1989), p.519

<sup>10</sup> R. A. C. Oliver, 'Mental tests in the study of the African', in *Africa* 7 (1934), p.46

<sup>11</sup> D. Westermann, *The African to-day* (London, 1934), pp.18-9, 39, 324; L. W. LaChard, 'The correlation of finger impressions and racial characteristics', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 19 (1919), pp.61-2; R. Smith, 'Biology and values in interwar Britain: C. S. Sherrington, Julian Huxley and the vision of progress', in *Past and present* 178 (2003), p.215; Huxley, 'Racial chess', pp.541, 546-8; Huxley, *Africa view* (1931; London, 1936), p.388; 'Review of *We Europeans: A survey of "racial" problems* by Julian S. Huxley and A. C. Haddon', in *Geographical journal* 87 (1936), p.374

<sup>12</sup> 'Review of *People of the book* by Major A. J. Pott', in *Geographical journal* 80 (1932), p.159

soldiers along Western lines.<sup>13</sup> While Pott occasionally deemed geographical features to be key in understanding the way Nuba hillmen lived,<sup>14</sup> elsewhere he displayed more racist assumptions. Any detribalized Dinka, for example, who had no or very little memory of their 'tribal origins' would nevertheless remain tied by blood into furthering Dinka interests.<sup>15</sup> This translated into a belief that race determined the rate at which change could occur,<sup>16</sup> a rate that will be examined in chapter three.

Race was an omnipresent factor in the popular press' explanations of the world. It accounted for the way the Irish resisted British occupation,<sup>17</sup> for the stability and 'soundness' of British political and educational institutions,<sup>18</sup> for the Germans' choice of Herr Hitler as their leader,<sup>19</sup> and why the more intelligent of Germans were so good at making money.<sup>20</sup> It would be easy to go on, though rather dull. There was no significant opposition to such racial ideas. This was in part because no effective leftist counter to such ideas was forthcoming. Due to a theoretical commitment to egalitarianism and international solidarity since at least the time of Marx and Engels it is reasonable to assume that the interwar left was the political grouping most likely to have espoused non-racist ideas.<sup>21</sup> Such people, however, reiterated the same racist ideas as their right-wing contemporaries, and it was not until much later that a significant number of leftists wrote against this paradigm.<sup>22</sup> This was indicative of their

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<sup>13</sup> A. J. Pott, *People of the book* (Edinburgh, 1932), pp.3-16, 66; see also B. R. M. Glossop, 'Leopards and Ajala', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 59 (1925), pp.712-22

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.49

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.30

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.64

<sup>17</sup> 'Perilous silence', in *The Times*, 28 September 1920, p.11

<sup>18</sup> 'Haig and Beatty: The city freedom', in *The Times*, 13 June 1919, p.6

<sup>19</sup> 'The problem of revision', in *The Times*, 29 April 1933, p.15

<sup>20</sup> 'Sir Ernest Cassel', in *The Times*, 23 September 1921, p.5; see also B. Copplestone, 'The saltblood of England: Part I – The Saxon and the Dane', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 50 (1921), pp.1-17

<sup>21</sup> K. Marx and F. Engels, *The communist manifesto* (1848; London, 1967), pp.120-1

<sup>22</sup> L. Woolf, *Empire and commerce in Africa: A study in economic imperialism* (1920; London, 1968), pp.365, 367; C. J. Walker, *Oliver Baldwin: A life of dissent* (London, 2003), p.38; M. Beloff, *Dream of Commonwealth: 1921-42* (London, 1989), p.224 n.69; P. B. Rich, *Race and empire in British politics* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.77-9; A. G. Russell, *Colour, race and empire* (London, 1944), pp.19-66, 278. The situation was similar to that in France; T. Stovall, 'The colour line behind the lines: Racial violence in France during the Great War', in *The American Historical Review* 103 (1998), pp.737-69; D. H. Slavin, 'The French Left and the Rif War, 1924-25: Racism and the limits of internationalism', in *Journal of contemporary history* 26 (1991), pp.5-32

typically supportive stance of the empire in general.<sup>23</sup> It was only an extremely small minority of biologists and other academics, such as American sociologist Charles Coulter, who categorically refuted racist ideas.<sup>24</sup>

However, while 'innate' racial characteristics were felt to account for the majority of the characteristics in any given human, what was disapproved of was the idea that differences borne out of race were to accompany, and support, 'discrimination'. There were certainly exceptions to this, such as the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order of 1925, but these could be justified on extraordinary grounds.<sup>25</sup> Of course, it is recognised that the British interwar conception of what constituted 'discrimination' differs from that which we hold today, and ideas as to what constituted reasonable treatment of racial 'others' are discussed throughout the present study. For now, a summary will suffice. The existence of racial difference was felt to be an indisputable fact, the recognition of which was believed to be of positive value, because it gave the British the ability to better understand the 'natural' proclivities of other peoples, and thus effectively tailor the nature of any paternalistic aid to be given.<sup>26</sup> Hence, contrary to what Wheeler Winston Dixon has written, it was not felt contradictory that Edgar Wallace both declared that he did not 'regard the native as my brother or my sister, nor even as my first cousin; nor as a poor relation. I do not love the native-nor do I hate him', and at the same time attack the 'oppression and neglect' faced by Africans in the Congo, where 'the very laws of life are outraged'.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, it was felt quite consistent for bestselling novelist J. B. Priestley to describe New Orleans jazzmen as 'niggers' who were racially different to the British, and yet attack in bitterly sarcastic tones his

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<sup>23</sup> From the vantage point of 1934, diplomat, writer and Labour MP Harold Nicolson argued in his biography of Curzon that the British had claimed Egypt for spurious reasons, the former refusing until 1920 to 'contend or to admit, even to ourselves... that we occupied Egypt by force' because of money, the Suez Canal and prestige. Even so, Cromer and his successors had conferred 'enormous benefits' upon Egyptians; H. Nicolson, *Curzon: The last phase 1919-1925 - A study in post-war diplomacy* (1934; London, 1937), pp.162-4, quote at p.163

<sup>24</sup> C. Coulter, 'The sociological problem', in *Modern industry and the African*, J. M. Davis (ed.), (London, 1933), pp.115-9

<sup>25</sup> Tabili, 'The construction of racial difference', *passim*, especially pp.56-8

<sup>26</sup> C. E. Wilson, 'Racism and private assistance: The support of West Indian and African missions in Liverpool, England, during the interwar years', in *African studies review* 35 (1992), pp.55-76

<sup>27</sup> Dixon, 'The colonial vision', p.131

character Lord Blankiron, 'one of the few strong men remaining in our degenerate race', whose treatment of foreigners as 'sub-human' was simply wrong.<sup>28</sup>

Such a stance also explains the aversion to educated 'coastal' Africans prevalent everywhere from Wallace and Leslie Chatteris' fiction to the reports of elite administrators;<sup>29</sup> such an aversion was on the basis that what Africans had become and were attempting to become ran against the racial grain. The reasoning behind such unbridled disgust at the 'coastal' educated African was eloquently put by Lord Lugard, who argued it

cannot be said with any vestige of truth that true learning and culture is despised by the white man when exhibited by a coloured man. It is the attempt to imitate unsuitable customs, dress – and even vices – and the absence of racial dignity which excites the white man's contempt.<sup>30</sup>

Not all European characteristics were deemed inappropriate for the African to assimilate. Instead, what was 'good' and what was 'bad' for the African to adopt was evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The natives to be most admired were those who came closest to the idea of the English gentleman, those who combined Western values with Eastern courtesy, while those who were to be most despised resembled the stereotypical cad.<sup>31</sup>

It is worth noting that in trying to gain British support for Mussolini's activities in Abyssinia, Italian sympathisers felt it necessary to argue that the racial and religious discrimination occurring in fascist Germany was not the way of Mussolini.<sup>32</sup> That the actions of pro-fascists were unable to convince anyone other than a few on the far-right fringes in

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<sup>28</sup> Priestley, *Good companions*, pp. 207, 290, 368; Priestley, *Wonder hero* (London, 1933), p.191

<sup>29</sup> G. M. Haliburton, 'Mark Christian Hayford: A non-success story', in *Journal of religion in Africa* 12 (1981), p.20; L. Chatteris, *The holy terror* (1932; London, 1940), pp.121, 145, 151

<sup>30</sup> F. D. Lugard, 'The colour problem', in *The Edinburgh review* 233 (1921), p.283; see also A. S. Rush, 'Imperial identity in colonial minds: Harold Moody and the League of Coloured Peoples, 1931-50', in *Twentieth century British history* 13 (2002), p.383

<sup>31</sup> F. M. Mannsaker, 'The dog that didn't bark: The subject races in imperial fiction at the turn of the century', in *The black presence in English literature*, D. Dabydeen (ed.), (Manchester, 1985), pp.118-9

<sup>32</sup> British Italian Council for Peace and Friendship, *England, Italy and Abyssinia: An Englishman's impartial survey* (London, 1936), pp.15-6



Britain that Italy's way in Africa was the correct one is immaterial<sup>33</sup> – what is of importance is that the followers of a state that explicitly sanctioned racist thinking found it necessary to downplay those implications of such thinking that they felt would be judged objectionable by a British audience.<sup>34</sup> This would also fit in with the fact that, while undoubtedly racist, the BUF's public rhetoric focussed more upon extreme nationalism than upon a replication of the Nazis' obsessively Aryan outlook; after all, the party was a keen supporter of empire and of the idea that Britain was head of a group of different nations and races, rather than, as was the case with German calls for *Lebensraum*, masters over racial degenerates.<sup>35</sup>

Certain fiction writers were at the forefront of kicking out against this 'positive' approach to race, rejecting it as a conceptual tool altogether. Of all interwar avant-garde works, Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) is perhaps the most notorious. Notions of identity are at the centre of the novel. The Jewish heritage of the central character, Bloom, directly precipitates his constantly being torn between belonging to, and being detached from, Joyce's Dublin.<sup>36</sup> Bloom's identity is never settled, a proximity to type that the other characters in the novel find difficult to accommodate – he is *nearly* fully Irish, and *nearly* fully Jewish, but never wholly either.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> R. J. B. Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London, 2002), p.304; *The Observer's* editor James Garvin's decision to back Italy over Abyssinia alienated him from mainstream opinion and contributed to the paper's decline in sales; D. Ayerst, *Garvin of the Observer* (Beckenham, 1985), p.249-59; see also, for example, "'If it is a war' – An A.B.C." in *The Observer*, 11 August 1935, p.10

<sup>34</sup> On the Italian state's ideas, see the excellent A. Gillette, *Racial theories in Fascist Italy* (London, 2002), *passim*, especially pp.43-57; see also E. Robertson, 'Race as a factor in Mussolini's policy in Africa and Europe', in *Journal of contemporary history* 23 (1988), p.50; E. J. Arnett and B. M. Allen, 'Europe in Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 38 (1939), pp.164-5

<sup>35</sup> D. S. Lewis, *Illusions of grandeur: Mosley, fascism and British society, 1931-81* (Manchester, 1987), pp.37-9, see also p.189

<sup>36</sup> For example, see J. Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922; Harmondsworth, 1986), pp.323, 327

<sup>37</sup> M. Reizbaum, *James Joyce's Judaic other* (Stanford, CA, 1999); see also N. R. Davison, *James Joyce, Ulysses, and the construction of Jewish identity: Culture, biography, and 'The Jew' in modernist Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.240-2. Though, as will be shown below, the majority of other interwar authors usually fervently endorsed a rigid and static black/white racial dichotomy, they were continually uncertain as to the position of Jews in relation to Western culture, frequently seeing them as existing both inside and outside of it; B. Cheyette, *Constructions of 'The Jew' in English literature and society: Racial representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge, 1993). Such ambiguity may quite have easily been facilitated by an ongoing uncertainty among some Jewish groups as to their own relation position in relation to the West; see, for example, J. Hirshberg, *Music in the Jewish community of Palestine 1880-1948* (Oxford, 1995), pp.244-9. See also E. Nolan, *James Joyce and nationalism* (London, 1995), p.xiii; Joyce, *A portrait of the artist as a young man* (1916; Oxford, 2000), p.29

Joyce's ongoing attempts to unravel solid and static notions of identity extended to his discussions of race. The Irishmen of the novel are able to feel a strong sense of solidarity with Zulus and the Congolese, who they see as existing under a similar imperial domination to themselves, but they nevertheless continue to espouse racist remarks and, in the case of Griffith, approve of black slavery.<sup>38</sup> In Vincent Cheng's words, 'the dreadful irony of such a blind and mirrored binarity of nationalistic ethnocentrism is precisely Joyce's point'.<sup>39</sup> As a result of his refutation of the 'reality' of racial boundaries Joyce never entered into a debate as to the value of either relativist or assimilationist ideas, for these involved the fixed and false system of polarities that he felt were implicit in the notion of one social force acting upon another.<sup>40</sup>

Joyce's refutation of 'Other' and 'Self' as polarized and static entities, however, was never going to unravel British racial notions, primarily because interwar Britons did not critically engage with *Ulysses*. The novel was predominantly viewed as worthless because it failed to put forward any coherent viewpoints. Influential reviewer John Middleton Murry noted in *The Times* soon after *Ulysses*' publication that literature was now

divided into the comprehensible and the incomprehensible... [The incomprehensible writer] writes, just as he chooses the colour of his wallpaper, to please himself alone. He does not hope to be understood ... we may prophecy with certainty that it [the public] will never, never come to terms with Mr. James Joyce's *Ulysses*.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> V. J. Cheng, *Joyce, race, and empire* (Cambridge, 1995), p.180

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.181

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, pp.291-2

<sup>41</sup> J. M. Murry, 'Pencilings: Chiaroscuro', in *The Times*, 28 April 1922, p.19; see also Murry, *The problem of style* (Oxford, 1922), p.110-1. Murry, husband of novelist Katherine Mansfield, was editor of *Athenaeum* between 1919 and 1921. For a similar example to Joyce in the musical world, that of American composer Charles Ives, see R. S. Perry, *Charles Ives and the American mind* (Kent, Ohio, 1974), p.106; F. R. Rossiter, *Charles Ives and his America* (London, 1976), pp.193-4, 200, 206, 228-34; D. Wooldridge, *Charles Ives: A portrait* (1974; London, 1975), pp.245-51

Similarly, Shane Leslie, literary critic for *The quarterly review*, stated flatly that Joyce had 'done his best to make his book unreadable and unquotable, and, we must add, unreviewable'.<sup>42</sup> Even writers of relatively highbrow modernist works attacked *Ulysses* and Joyce for failing to be intelligible, as Aldous Huxley did in his 1928 novel *Point counter point*.<sup>43</sup>

Writing in his weekly *Evening Standard* column, Arnold Bennett was not so condemnatory. He argued that while Joyce was 'damnably unequal and exasperating', he believed *Ulysses* would be influential; nevertheless such influence would solely be a result of its innovatory prose style, rather than because it provided a new way of thinking about the world, let alone identity in particular. For Bennett, if authors used Joyce's style in an intelligible way, they would attain greatness.<sup>44</sup> At any rate, despite attaining a certain level of notoriety due to its allegedly obscene content, the book was read by very few. The first British edition, printed in 1936, ran to only 1000 copies. It was only in 1937 that the same publishers released an unlimited edition. Before the mid- to late-'thirties potential readers had to purchase the work at great cost from Europe.<sup>45</sup>

Joseph Conrad, unlike Joyce, was a popular and well-respected author in the interwar period.<sup>46</sup> Some academics have argued that Conrad refuted the notion that race was a definite and insoluble barrier in much the same way that Joyce did. John McClure is not unique in stating that Conrad's Malay novels repudiate racist ideas because the author argued that all

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<sup>42</sup> S. Leslie, 'Ulysses', in *The quarterly review* 473 (1922), p.234; see also 'Pack words away', in *The Times*, 14 March 1934, p.13

<sup>43</sup> A. Huxley, *Point counter point* (1928; London, 1947); B. Nugel, 'Literary criticism in the modern novel: Huxley's response to Joyce', in *Critical essays on Aldous Huxley*, J. Meckier (ed.), (New York, 1996), pp.128-9. The private credo of famous author and physicist C. P. Snow, written in 1942, included the belief that Joyce's *Finnegan's wake* was 'literally unreadable'; H. Hobson, P. Knightley and L. Russell, *The pearl of days: An intimate memoir of The Sunday Times 1822-1972* (London, 1972), p.223

<sup>44</sup> A. Bennett, 'A critic of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature', in *Evening Standard*, 31 May 1928, in *Arnold Bennett: The 'Evening Standard' years-'Books and persons' 1926-1931*, A. Mylett (ed.), (London, 1974), p.161; see also Bennett, 'Give us fewer and better books', in *Evening Standard*, 3 January 1929, in *ibid*, p.229; Bennett, 'The oddest novel ever written', in *Evening Standard*, 8 August 1929, in *ibid*, p.292

<sup>45</sup> The work was banned in America until December 1933; 'Ulysses: American ban raised', in *The Times*, 8 December 1933, p.12

<sup>46</sup> See, for example, J. Bennett, 'Mr. Hardy and Mr. Conrad', in *The Times*, 3 May 1922, p.16; E. Rubbra, *Gustav Holst* (London, 1974), p.17; J. Gindin, *John Galsworthy's life and art* (Basingstoke, 1987), p.459

differences between 'West' and 'East' were caused by social factors.<sup>47</sup> Redmond O'Hanlon's study of the relationship between Conrad and Charles Darwin is, however, more convincing; Conrad seems to have been highly influenced by late Lamarckian and Darwinian thinking.<sup>48</sup> *The informer*, a 1906 short story about the narrator's meeting with an anarchist, details the former's thoughts; the 'monster' sat opposite him 'was not even Chinese, which would have enabled one to contemplate him calmly across the gulf of racial difference'.<sup>49</sup> Definite notions of racial demarcation are repeated elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> For instance, mulattos are judged to have different racial strains 'weakened, attenuated, diluted as it were in a bucket of water'.<sup>51</sup> Such ideas manifest themselves in traditionally negative declarations; the only reference to Africa in Conrad's *The arrow of gold* concerns a man stabbed by a blade that was 'an Abyssinian or Nubian production... the clumsiest thing imaginable... A mere cruel-looking curio of inconceivable clumsiness to European eyes'.<sup>52</sup> All of these examples, and others, are not subverted elsewhere by more nuanced approaches to the racial 'Other';<sup>53</sup> Conrad conforms to Edward Said's 'Othering' stereotype.<sup>54</sup>

Given that Conrad had a racist outlook, the extent to which these views were tied to a belief or otherwise in British-induced colonial development remains to be seen. First of all, it needs to be noted that the work Conrad is best-known for today, *Heart of darkness*, was virtually unheard of among the author's interwar audience, much as it had been since the story's first publication in 1902.<sup>55</sup> The same fate of obscurity befell Conrad's other short story to deal

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<sup>47</sup> J. McClure, 'Problematic presence: The colonial other in Kipling and Conrad', in *The black presence*, pp.154-8; see also I. Watt, 'Conrad criticism and *The nigger of Narcissus*', in *Nineteenth-century fiction* 12 (London, 1958), pp.270-5; for the argument that Conrad was racist, but far less so than his peers, see P. E. Fircchow, *Envisioning Africa: Racism and imperialism in 'Heart of Darkness'* (Lexington, 2000), pp.11, 164-5

<sup>48</sup> R. O'Hanlon, *Joseph Conrad and Charles Darwin: The influence of scientific thought on Conrad's fiction* (Edinburgh, 1984)

<sup>49</sup> J. Conrad, 'The informer', in *Selected short stories* (Ware, 1997), p.140

<sup>50</sup> Conrad, 'Karain', in *ibid*, p.38

<sup>51</sup> Conrad, 'A smile of fortune: Harbour story', in *'Twixt land and sea* (1912; Harmondsworth, 1978), p.35

<sup>52</sup> Conrad, *The arrow of gold: A story between two notes* (1919; London, 1954), p.325

<sup>53</sup> Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the reading public* (London, 1932), pp.265-66; A. White, *Joseph Conrad and the adventure tradition* (Cambridge, 1993), p.193

<sup>54</sup> E. Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London, 1993), pp.xx-xxi, 120-1

<sup>55</sup> White, *Conrad and adventure tradition*, p.172. Much interest in the work is due to Chinua Achebe's infamous 1975 attack on the short story; C. Achebe, 'An image of Africa: Racism in

exclusively with Africa, 1897's *An outpost of progress*. It was only following Doubleday employee Alfred Knopf's well-executed publicity campaign for *Chance* (1913) that Conrad's works sold in significant numbers. His post-1913 full-length novels such as *Victory* (1915) sold well. However, when Conrad became better known, of his earlier work it was the novels, such as the reissued *Nigger of the Narcissus*, rather than the short story collections, which publishers pushed for sale, because these were considered marketable.<sup>56</sup> Therefore it is unsurprising that neither *The Times'* lengthy obituary of Conrad in 1924 nor *The Cornhill Magazine's* retrospective of the man twelve years later mentioned *Heart of darkness*, despite their references to numerous other works by the author.<sup>57</sup> Thus, by the interwar period, Conrad was known as a man who wrote tales about espionage, (a matter compounded when Alfred Hitchcock reworked *The secret agent* as the film *Sabotage* in 1936), South East Asia and, most importantly, the sea, but not about Africa.<sup>58</sup>

Nevertheless, the modern academic claim that Conrad's stories set in the Malay Peninsula can be seen as a rejection of imperialism as a whole remains intact thusfar.<sup>59</sup> However, it is just as easy for avowedly anti-imperialist academics to detect anti-imperialism in Conrad today as it was for his avowedly pro-imperialist contemporaries to not detect anything in his

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Conrad's *Heart of darkness*', in *Postcolonial discourses: An anthology*, G. Castle (ed.), (Oxford, 2001), pp.210-20. Interesting points are made in O. Knowles, "'Who's afraid of Arthur Schopenhauer?': A new context for Conrad's *Heart of darkness*", in *Nineteenth century literature* 49 (1994), p.103

<sup>56</sup> J. Meyer, *Joseph Conrad: A biography* (New York, 1991), pp.269-70, 291-2; Z. Najder, *Joseph Conrad: A chronicle*, H. Carroll-Najder (trans.), (Cambridge, 1983), p.380; J. Baines, *Joseph Conrad: A critical biography* (London, 1960), pp.381-2; see also D. Hudson, 'Reading', in *Edwardian England 1901-1914*, S. Nowell-Smith (ed.), (London, 1964), p.315; N. J. Hall, *Max Beerbohm: A kind of a life* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2002), p.145

<sup>57</sup> 'Joseph Conrad: A philosopher of the sea', in *The Times*, 4 August 1924, p.10; R. Colenutt, 'Joseph Conrad - Twelve years after', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 154 (1936), pp.129-40. In fact, *The Times* does not seem to have registered the existence of *Heart of darkness* until 1926, and even then this mention was a brief one; 'Conrad's last essays', in *The Times*, 9 March 1926, p.22

<sup>58</sup> See, for example, T. Moulton, 'Joseph Conrad', in *The quarterly review* 481 (1924), pp.248-9; N. Marsh, *A man lay dead* (1934; London, 1994), p.37. This increased attention to Conrad's sea novels was compounded by, for example, 'A high wind in Jamaica', in *The Times*, 16 November 1932, p.15; 'Typhoon', in *The Times*, 22 September 1934, p.13; J. G. Sutherland, *At sea with Joseph Conrad* (London, 1922); A. Safroni-Middleton, *Tropic shadows: Memories of the South Seas, together with reminiscences of the author's sea meetings with Joseph Conrad* (London, 1927)

<sup>59</sup> Bignami, 'Joseph Conrad', p.210

works that undermined the empire;<sup>60</sup> while they are now seen as dismissals of an entire social system, the failures of the British in Conrad's novels were then taken as examples of individual folly. Arnold Bennett argued that Conrad's main characters 'have a way of sinning against their own codes, and then redeeming themselves at terrific cost'; thus the problems that they encounter are a direct result of their transgression from Western ways rather than a continuation of them.<sup>61</sup> For Bennett, Conrad believes that those who 'sin' are outside of the West's remit, a perception shared by *The Times* with respect to *Lord Jim*.<sup>62</sup> Conrad himself fuelled such perceptions; his 1920 author's note to *Victory* stressed the rarity of such Western misadventures, militating against people drawing wider inferences and universal conclusions from works that concerned themselves with a handful of individuals.<sup>63</sup>

After all, as Marialuisa Bignami has noted, Conrad never explicitly stated his attitude to the British Empire; the reader instead has to try and reconstruct his ideas about British imperialism from what he wrote about other imperialisms, such as the Belgians in the Congo.<sup>64</sup> He certainly attacked the Belgians, not merely in *Heart of darkness*, but also in the then better-known *The inheritors*, which was written in collaboration with Ford Madox Ford.<sup>65</sup> Elsewhere in Conrad's fiction, in *Karain* for example, the Dutch as a colonizing entity are depicted highly negatively, in stark contrast to the English.<sup>66</sup> Conrad never portrayed the British as a people unfit to colonize. It is certainly difficult to believe that Ormsby-Gore would have publicly championed Conrad's work if the MP had thought it would have

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<sup>60</sup> For Conrad's ambiguity, see T. Billy, *A wilderness of words: Closure and disclosure in Conrad's short fiction* (Lubbock, 1997), p.223; that Conrad was consistently anti-imperialist, and not merely in *Heart of Darkness*, see H. Hawkins, 'Conrad's critique of imperialism in *Heart of darkness*', in *PMLA* 94 (1979), pp.297-8; see also Meyer, *Joseph Conrad*, p.165

<sup>61</sup> Bennett, 'Mr H. M. Tomlinson's first novel', in *Evening Standard*, 1 September 1927, in Mylett (ed.), *Arnold Bennett*, p.80

<sup>62</sup> 'Joseph Conrad: A philosopher of the sea', p.10

<sup>63</sup> Conrad, *Victory* (1915; Harmondsworth, 1963), p.11

<sup>64</sup> M. Bignami, 'Joseph Conrad, the Malay archipelago, and the decadent hero', in *Review of English studies* 38 (1987), p.199

<sup>65</sup> D. Seed, 'Introduction', in Conrad and F. M. Ford, *The inheritors: An extravagant story* (1901; Liverpool, 1999), p.xvi; see also *ibid*, pp.15-20, 25-6

<sup>66</sup> Conrad, 'Karain', pp.51-3

harmed his career by siding with a vehement opponent of British imperialism.<sup>67</sup> For the Tory MP, as well as the overwhelming majority of the British metropole, Conrad's writings were merely beautifully written works of adventure fiction that, if anything, highlighted the need for the British to colonize given that other imperial powers were corrupt and rotten and Britain was not.<sup>68</sup> To his readers, Conrad invariably validated established social 'truths' that later generations came to believe he tried to dismantle.

This helps to explain why Conrad was not then viewed as a pessimist. In 1922 one Joan Bennett, (not the famous American actress, who was only 12 at the time), wrote to the editor of *The Times*. She was contributing to the debate of the day as to which of Thomas Hardy and Conrad was the greater novelist. Bennett thought the answer was Conrad, on the basis that he 'observes mankind with greater detachment and without bias which pessimism is apt to give to Mr. Hardy's outlook'.<sup>69</sup> When Conrad died, *The Observer* remarked that during his lifetime he had 'refused to lie either on the gloomy or the sentimental side.'<sup>70</sup> These views had a healthy precedent in pre-1914 critical responses to Conrad.<sup>71</sup>

Like Conrad, the Bloomsbury group of writers are now well-known and, usually, critically applauded. This reputation, however, has only developed significantly in the post-1945 period. While, as will be discussed below, there were important members of the Bloomsbury group who managed to strike out and become popular on their own terms, most works by Bloomsbury writers were little known to those outside London's interwar literary circles.<sup>72</sup> Virginia Woolf managed to at least attract a certain amount of notoriety. She vociferously

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<sup>67</sup> Ormsby-Gore, *Report by the Right Honourable W. G. A. Ormsby-Gore M.P. (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies) on his visit to Malaya, Ceylon, and Java during the year 1928* (London, 1928), p.14

<sup>68</sup> White, *Conrad and adventure tradition*, pp.5, 203; Meyer, *Joseph Conrad*, p.191

<sup>69</sup> 'Mr. Hardy and Mr. Conrad', in *The Times*, 3 May 1922, p.16

<sup>70</sup> J. C. Squire, 'Joseph Conrad', in *The Observer*, 10 August 1924, p.4

<sup>71</sup> Baines, *Conrad*, p.310; E. Wright, 'The romance of the outlands', in *Quarterly Review* 203 (1905), p.58; 'A book of the day', in *Daily news*, 13 October 1911, p.3; see also 'Review of *Chance*', in *The Daily Express*, 15 January 1914, p.2; D. S. Meldrum, 'Mr. Conrad's new novel: A human study of finished literary art', in *The Daily Chronicle*, 15 January 1914, p.4

<sup>72</sup> For instance, Mary Butts' 1936 article 'Bloomsbury' for *The Cornhill* was rejected at the time on the grounds that the group was not widely known; J. Garrity, 'Selling culture to the 'civilized': Bloomsbury, *British Vogue*, and the marketing of national identity', in *Modernism/Modernity* 6 (1999), p.29. The critical and commercial impotence of the career of artist Mark Gertler shows a lack of public awareness of Bloomsbury was not confined to the literary sphere; S. Macdougall, *Mark Gertler* (London, 2002), pp.122-3, 146, 253, 280

condemned the assimilationist tendencies of men in her feminist call-to-arms *A room of one's own*. Though the centrepiece of the work's argument is the demand that women should be entitled to financial and intellectual freedom in order that they may create, Woolf criticised men for wanting to make their mark on everything; one of the 'great advantages' of being a woman, she felt, was that 'one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her'.<sup>73</sup> The focus of her disapproval here evidently lies predominantly with men, rather than with imperialism. However, this anti-assimilationist sentiment ties in with comments made by Woolf elsewhere, and with the vehemently pro-pastoralist – that is, explicitly anti-urban and anti-modern development – beliefs of the interwar homosexual subculture to which a small group of those around Woolf, such as her friend and one-time lover Vita Sackville-West, belonged.<sup>74</sup> Such strident rhetoric led to Woolf's incurring the wrath of some, who wrote off her arguments as the petty product of an under-stimulated and over-bored mind.<sup>75</sup> Writing in 1935, literary critic Frank Swinnerton argued that Woolf embodied a Bloomsbury-wide problem; the works the group produced were aloof, vulgar, snobbish, 'conversationally insincere...[and] full of jealous contempt'.<sup>76</sup> Swinnerton was certainly not alone in refuting the opinions of Bloomsbury authors on the basis that their collective mentality was petty and contrary.<sup>77</sup> The liberal *News Chronicle* even managed to make a reference to Bloomsbury's 'intellectual snobbery' in an article on Soviet Russia.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> V. Woolf, *A room of one's own* (1928; London, 2004), p.58

<sup>74</sup> N. Nicholson, *Virginia Woolf* (London, 2000), p.21; S. Raitt, *Vita and Virginia: The work and friendship of V. Sackville-west and Virginia Woolf* (Oxford, 1993), p.12

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, H. C. Harwood, 'Recent tendencies in English fiction', in *The Quarterly Review* 500 (1929), pp.321-8

<sup>76</sup> Swinnerton, *Georgian literary scene*, p.358; see also K. Mansfield to D. Brett, 12 May 1918, in *The letters and journals of Katherine Mansfield: A selection*, C. K. Stead (ed.), (Harmondsworth, 1977), p.110

<sup>77</sup> Skidelsky, *John Maynard Keynes 1883-1946: Economist, philosopher, statesman* (2003; London, 2004), pp.144-5, 259; L. Edel, *Bloomsbury: A house of lions* (London, 1979), p.46; see also 'Queen of the high-brows', in *Evening Standard*, 28 November 1929, in Mylett (ed.), *Arnold Bennett*, p.327. It was, however, a minority, such as D. H. Lawrence, who deemed Bloomsbury indicative of a wider sense of English decadence and decline; M. Holroyd, *Works on paper: The craft of biography and autobiography* (Washington, D.C., 2002), p.218

<sup>78</sup> 'The snobbery of Soviet Russia', in *News Chronicle*, 3 October 1930, p.8



Not everyone, however, agreed with Swinnerton.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, those works that accorded Woolf some contemporary praise were not seen then as some now see them. For example, for present-day literary critic Ann-Marie Priest, *Night and day's* principal character Katharine Hilbery is a woman who 'repeatedly manifests the desire to leave not only society but also identity itself behind - to become nothing... [which can be] understood not as a desire for death but as an expression of extreme discontent with the models of identity that are open to her within her society.'<sup>80</sup> However, to one champion of Woolf's, an anonymous reviewer for *The Times* writing in 1919, *Night and day* was 'a love story, pure and simple... all art and no preaching'.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, where one commentary from 1994 believed Woolf's *The years* (1937) 'extensively' alludes to the British Empire in order 'to epitomize the folly and pretentiousness of exporting empty values abroad',<sup>82</sup> those who enjoyed the work at the time simply did not register the presence of such forthright opinions in the work.<sup>83</sup>

At any rate, the frequency with which readers drew conclusions from Woolf's works must not be overstated; some of her fiction was, and remains, difficult reading. While it now seems to some today that the characterizations and plot of *Mrs. Dalloway* serve to reinforce the anti-imperialist, anti-assimilationist opinions expressed within *A room of one's own*,<sup>84</sup> upon the former's publication in 1926 even Arnold Bennett publicly admitted that he could not make out the work's message.<sup>85</sup> Whether such discrepancies occurred as a result of Virginia Woolf being too far ahead of her time for her peers to fully understand the implications of her works, or because modern literary scholars search too hard to find ideas contained within her writing, is immaterial; what is important is that when Woolf's novels were read and understood, they were done so within a different framework of understanding to that now in existence.

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<sup>79</sup> See, for example, 'The literary scene 1910-1935', in *The Times*, 26 March 1935, p.10

<sup>80</sup> A.-M. Priest, 'Between being and nothingness: The "astonishing precipice" of Virginia Woolf's *Night and day*', in *Journal of modern literature* 26 (2003), p.66

<sup>81</sup> 'Books of the week', in *The Times*, 30 October 1919, p.15

<sup>82</sup> K. J. Phillips, *Virginia Woolf against Empire* (Knoxville, 1994), pp.1-26, 48, quote at p.1

<sup>83</sup> See, for example, 'New novels: Time and Mrs. Woolf', in *The Times*, 19 March 1937, p.10

<sup>84</sup> V. Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925; London, 1950), pp.196-8

<sup>85</sup> 'Another criticism of the new school', in *Evening Standard*, 2 December 1926, in Mylett (ed.), *Arnold Bennett*, p.5

Similar to Woolf's ideas, Vita Sackville-West's short story *Seducers in Ecuador* seems to suggest that the climate of foreign lands breaks men so rapidly as to prevent them from exporting their ideas, but this was a little known work in the interwar period.<sup>86</sup> Sackville-West's bestseller *All passion spent* seems to some modern critics to oppose the idea of men exporting their ideas to the rest of the world,<sup>87</sup> and yet, upon its publication in 1931 it was deemed a gentle and 'very English' work, notable for its humour and warmth, rather than for being a scathing indictment of imperialism.<sup>88</sup> Much the same occurred with respect to E. M. Forster. Some marked him out as an author who wrote 'minor fiction', and he was only appreciated by a small number of people.<sup>89</sup> However, those who did draw conclusions from Forster's work did so in ways that are very different to modern critical perspectives. Regular *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer R. D. Charques liked *A passage to India*, but merely noted that Forster possessed a good deal of ability to distinguish between the trivial and the profound, recognising nothing subversive within its pages where many today argue that he was ambiguous, or wholly opposed, to imperialism.<sup>90</sup>

While Virginia Woolf might have criticised the coloniser, this did not mean that she sided with the colonised. Though references to non-whites are few in her work, she was racist, as works like *The London Scene* suggest.<sup>91</sup> In this she was like her husband Leonard, though in his journalism he was more interested in the ramifications of Africa for the rest of the world

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<sup>86</sup> V. Sackville-West, *Seducers in Ecuador & The heir* (1924; London, 1987), p.36

<sup>87</sup> V. Glendinning, 'Introduction', in Sackville-West, *All passion spent* (1931; London, 1991), pp.viii, xiii. See also *ibid.*, pp.15-6, 78-9, 121-2, 183, 220-1

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, 'New novels: Mr. Garnett and Miss Sackville-West', in *The Times*, 29 May 1931, p.9

<sup>89</sup> Harwood, 'Recent tendencies', p.326; see also Mansfield, diaries, [May 1917], in *The letters and journals of Katherine Mansfield*, p.82. On the extent of ignorance of Forster's work, see E. Goodall to the editor, *The Times*, 16 June, 1922, p.16; Hudson, 'Reading', in *Edwardian England*, p.315

<sup>90</sup> May, *Critical times*, p.165; for recent arguments as to Forster's complicity with, or resistance to, imperialism, see G. K. Das, *E. M. Forster's India* (London, 1977); S. Bose, *Attitudes to imperialism: Kipling, Forster and Paul Scott* (Delhi, 1990), pp.66-7; M. Green, *The English novel in the twentieth century: The doom of empire* (London, 1984), pp.55-7; M. M. Mahood, *The colonial encounter: A reading of six novels* (London, 1977), pp.65-91; Said, *Culture*, pp.242, 246

<sup>91</sup> S. Sarker, 'Locating a native Englishness in Virginia Woolf's *The London scene*', in *National Women's Association Journal* 13 (2001), pp.6-20

rather than the continent in its own right.<sup>92</sup> However, according to Leon Edel, Leonard's *The village in the jungle* (1913) exemplified a different strain of anti-assimilationist sentiment to that of Virginia; the 'existential center' of his philosophy was that 'man was driven to conquer this evil [the jungle and the demons that they were felt to embody], knowing all the while that it is unconquerable, that it resides in the depths of the Primitive self.'<sup>93</sup> And yet, as was the case with Ormsby-Gore and Conrad, it is difficult to see how Hugh Clifford could have publicly praised *The village in the jungle* were it then seen in the same light as it is now.<sup>94</sup>

However, in his non-fiction *Empire and commerce in Africa* (1920), which was published during Woolf's time as secretary of the Labour Party's advisory committee on international and colonial questions, he concluded that 'the general effects of European policy in Africa... have been almost wholly evil.'<sup>95</sup> Later he would write unflinchingly that

the relation of the European to the Asiatic or African, wherever the former has found it possible and profitable to rule the latter, has easily and naturally become authoritarian... [The psychology of imperialism] is based on a negation of the democratic ideas of individual equality and freedom.<sup>96</sup>

But in the interwar years, Leonard Woolf's non-fiction did not receive much attention. Leonard was instead known, where at all, as co-founder of the Hogarth Press and as a contributor for short-lived, commercially unsuccessful, periodicals such as *The International Review* and *The Contemporary Review*.<sup>97</sup> He did contribute to the *New Statesman*, but under the editorship of Clifford Sharp this remained a distinctly fringe publication.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> See, for example, L. Woolf, 'Meditation on Abyssinia', in *The Political Quarterly in the thirties*, W. A. Robson (ed.), (London, 1971), pp.158-74

<sup>93</sup> Edel, *Bloomsbury*, p.117

<sup>94</sup> Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, Volume Two, p.433

<sup>95</sup> L. Woolf, *Empire and commerce in Africa*, p.352

<sup>96</sup> L. Woolf, *After the deluge: A study of communal psychology* (1931; Harmondsworth, 1937), pp.260-1

<sup>97</sup> 'The problem of peace: A variety of opinions', in *The Times*, 24 October 1933, p.19; Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A life* (London, 2006), pp.233-320

<sup>98</sup> The fortunes of the publication began to improve under Kingsley Martin following its merger with the liberal *Nation*, but even then it did not become a major force until the end of

Whatever misgivings present-day literary critics have regarding the quality of crime fiction, its importance in ascertaining the nature of the ideas presented to the interwar British upper middle class is difficult to overstate. Crime fiction was not merely the pulp reading material of the working and lower-middle classes. Upper-middle-class literary critics often earnestly discussed the virtues of such works, and the taste for tales of murder and theft only grew during the interwar period.<sup>99</sup> By 1939 approximately one in every four books published in the English language was a detective novel.<sup>100</sup> Such popularity is not the only reason why these novels can assist in attempts to gauge British perceptions of certain issues. In order to draw people into believing that what they were reading was plausible, crime writers needed to surround their fantastic, and sometimes improbable, murder scenarios with credible, socially-accepted normative 'truths' that linked the fictional world to the real one. Popular fiction, as Colin Watson has noted, 'is not evangelistic...it implants no new ideas';<sup>101</sup> more specifically, during the interwar period, crime fiction inevitably reflected a conservative value system that legitimised the established social order.<sup>102</sup>

Crime fiction certainly did nothing to radically alter British perceptions of Africa.<sup>103</sup> Instead, it drew upon long-held assumptions as to the racially-primitive nature of African society.

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the Second World War; A. Smith, *The New Statesman: Portrait of a political weekly, 1913-31* (1996), pp.134, 186, 265-75

<sup>99</sup> C. Watson, *Snobbery with violence: Crime stories and their audience* (London, 1971), p.95. For examples of the merits of different crime novels being discussed seriously by literary critics, see H. G. Hutchinson, 'Detective fiction', in *The Quarterly Review* 501 (1929), pp.148-60; 'Murder everywhere', in *The Times*, 2 July 1935, p.8; 'Books for the holidays-I.', in *The Times*, 26 July 1935, p.8; Swinnerton, *Georgian literary scene*, pp.448-50; D. L. Sayers to Margaret Babington, 30 July 1937, in *The letters of Dorothy L. Sayers Volume Two - 1937-1943: From novelist to playwright*, B. Reynolds (ed.), (Cambridge, 1997), p.35; Waugh, diary entry for 27 January 1931, in Davie (ed.), *Evelyn Waugh*, p.349

<sup>100</sup> Watson, *Snobbery*, p.96; see also Light, *Forever England*, p.65; B. Diemert, *Graham Greene's thrillers and the 1930s* (Montreal, 1996), p.18

<sup>101</sup> Watson, *Snobbery*, p.71

<sup>102</sup> Diemert, *Graham Greene's thrillers*, p.92; G. Day, 'Ordeal by analysis: Agatha Christie's *The thirteen problems*', in *Twentieth-century suspense: The thriller comes of age*, Bloom (ed.), (Basingstoke, 1990), p.85

<sup>103</sup> See G. D. Killam, *Africa in English fiction 1874-1939* (Ibadan, 1968), pp.45-54. This is not to overstate the amount that authors dealt with Africa. Bestselling novelist Dorothy L. Sayers was a conservative, Christian, patriotic Englishwoman whose mockery of those English who hate foreigners without justification, (even if she allowed her detective Lord Peter Wimsey to use the word 'nigger' and get annoyed by 'beastly' Syrian peasants), was commensurate with her gently-mocking opposition to an uncritical stance on anything, a pro-imperial outlook included. Nevertheless, the amount of references she makes about

Agatha Christie was one of the most widely-read of the interwar crime novelists. Susan Rowland has argued that Christie's works are ambiguous regarding racial issues, but that racism is endorsed neither by the detective nor the detecting plot.<sup>104</sup> This line of argument is inaccurate. There are numerous instances where Christie's declarations as to what Africa 'is' are not undermined by countervailing arguments that seek to unravel, or render ambiguous the legitimacy of, racism as a valid standpoint. While it is true that her most enduring creation, Hercule Poirot, does not demonise other races, he does believe that certain racial strains account for certain patterns of behaviour.<sup>105</sup> Christie concurred with Robert Baden-Powell, and contemporaneous bestselling authors such as Edgar Wallace that certain facial characteristics provided a 'good guide' to a person's character.<sup>106</sup> For instance, she used 'low beetling brows' to signify a person was suspicious and could not be trusted,<sup>107</sup> providing cultural images that deeply resonated with societal memories of the deep-set features of popular hate figures such as Sweeney Todd.<sup>108</sup> Christie also condoned a British tendency to mistrust foreigners,<sup>109</sup> making it clear that her crime-fighting heroines and heroes were perfectly justified in their racist mindsets.<sup>110</sup> Christie used Jane, her heroine in *Death in the*

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subjugated peoples are few in number, and concern themselves with the Middle East and other non-African areas; T. L. Lewis, *Dorothy L. Sayers's Wimsey and interwar British society* (Lewiston, 1974), pp.76, 82; D. L. Sayers, *Have his carcase* (1932; London, 1974), pp.55, 190-1, 275, 278-9; Sayers, *The nine tailors* (1934; London, 1982), p.8; A. Loades (ed.), *Dorothy L. Sayers: Spiritual writings* (Boston, 1993); Sayers, *Strong poison* (1930; Sevenoaks, 1991), p.218; Sayers, *Striding folly* (London, 1972), pp.43, 56, 79, 81

<sup>104</sup> S. Rowland, *From Agatha Christie to Ruth Rendell: British women writers in detective and crime fiction* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.66

<sup>105</sup> For example, Christie, *Lord Edgware dies* (1933; London, 1954), p.11

<sup>106</sup> Baden-Powell, *Scouting*, pp.3-4, 81; E. Wallace, *The four just men* (1905; Oxford, 1995), passim. Baden-Powell argued that the shape and type of face were in concord with personality traits, but that the size of a head was unimportant; Baden-Powell, *Scouting*, pp.194-5

<sup>107</sup> Christie, *The secret adversary* (1922; London, 1991), pp.59-65, quote at p.61; see also *Peril at End House* (1932; London, 1987), p.64

<sup>108</sup> H. L. Malchow, *Gothic images of race in nineteenth-century Britain* (Stanford, California, 1996), pp.42-8

<sup>109</sup> Christie, *The mysterious affair at Styles* (1920; London, 2001), p.179; Christie, *Death on the Nile* (1938; London, 1993), p.77; Christie, *The Seven Dials mystery* (1929; London, 1997), p.65; Christie, *Cards on the table* (1936; London, 1996), pp.10, 19-20, 31. See also Christie, *Murder on the Orient Express* (1934; London, 1994), passim, though here national differences are temporarily set aside in order that a murder can be effected.

<sup>110</sup> Christie, *Styles*, pp.198, 215; Christie, *The murder of Roger Ackroyd* (1926; Glasgow, 1957), p.26; see also Christie, *The thirteen problems* (1932; Glasgow, 1965), pp.53, 151, 177; Christie, *Three act tragedy* (1935; London, 1998), p.121; Christie, *Murder in the mews* (1937; Glasgow,

*clouds*, to indicate her own sentiments. On going on a date with Norman Gale, the narrator notes it was

one of those enchanting evenings when every word and confidence exchanged seemed to reveal a bond of sympathy and shared tastes. They liked dogs and disliked cats. They both hated oysters, and loved smoked salmon... They disliked loud voices, noisy restaurants and negroes.<sup>111</sup>

Such beliefs inform the racist 'truths' that litter Christie's work when dealing with Africa. Alison Light is correct to point out that Christie attempted to reconfigure certain aspects of interwar conservative discourse via a 'feminising' disavowal of traditional elitism.<sup>112</sup> However, as noted in chapter one, Light goes on to say that this was matched by a heavy decrease in the amount of space Christie gave over to the depiction of foreign events, which is an exaggeration.<sup>113</sup> Christie constantly used imperial settings as a backdrop to her work, which was consonant with her continuous travels abroad with her husband, the archaeologist Max Mallowan. *The man in the brown suit*, set predominantly in Africa, depicts East Africans as cannibals,<sup>114</sup> while some of the work's European characters encounter a South African servant, Batani, described as one of a simple and stupid people who speak a 'guttural language'. Batani hovers about the party, 'counting no more than a dog might have done'.<sup>115</sup>

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1964), p.169; Christie, *Appointment with death* (1938; London, 1992), p.44; Christie, *Roger Ackroyd*, pp.75, 129. Interestingly, Christie put different crimes into two groups; for her there were the dastardly, underhand crimes, such as Bolshevik plots against the state, theft, and the like, that were motivated by sinister, evil intentions, and those such as murder that were, though undoubtedly morally reprehensible, nevertheless understandable. For Christie, people from all walks of life could commit the latter type of crime given sufficient motivation, while only certain types of people usually committed those of the former, underhand, type; see, for example, Christie, *The big four* (1927; London, 2002)

<sup>111</sup> Christie, *Death in the clouds* (1935; London, 1984), p.106

<sup>112</sup> Light, *Forever England*, pp.76-82. Nevertheless, much of Christie's popularity undoubtedly derived from her escapist depictions of a cast of rich and famous people, which has implications for this argument that are not dealt with adequately by Light.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8, 89-100

<sup>114</sup> Christie, *The man in the brown suit* (1924; London, 2002), p.109; see also Christie, *Chimneys*, p.8

<sup>115</sup> Christie, *Brown suit*, pp.265, 272; see also Christie, *Chimneys*, p.17

African arts, crafts and music are depicted as crude and childlike.<sup>116</sup> To travel to Africa was akin to moving back in time to the Neanderthal era.<sup>117</sup> In *Ten little niggers*, set on the sinister Nigger Island, Emily Brent argues that white and black are brothers; immediately after this outburst she is shown to be mad.<sup>118</sup>

Similarly to Rowland's reading of Christie, G. K. Chesterton's biographer Christopher Hollis has argued that the famous author of the Father Brown novels was not racist.<sup>119</sup> But in his work, 'niggers' 'jabber' away to each other, and act in a 'debased' manner.<sup>120</sup> While Chesterton opposed eugenics,<sup>121</sup> that he thought along explicitly racist lines is borne out by his descriptions of the indigenous peoples living on the north coast of South America; they were apparently capable of working hard when on their own land, especially those who were more than half Spanish.<sup>122</sup> Elsewhere, it is explicitly 'racial' strains that account for the perpetuation of certain characteristics, be they positives such as valour, or negatives such as insanity.<sup>123</sup> As for perceptions of empire, Hollis believes that Chesterton was anti-imperialist because he was pessimistic as to the ability of one body of people to change another.<sup>124</sup> However, such anti-imperialism is never proved. Furthermore, Chesterton's obituary in *The Times* constructed him as a patriot who disliked mechanization and other modern facets of society, but not as an anti-imperialist. The paper also believed that while he would sometimes critique the views of the majority, this was Chesterton being oppositional for opposition's sake; furthermore, during his lifetime he had actually been full of 'hearty optimism'.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Christie, *Brown suit*, pp.237-8, 245; Christie, *Roger Ackroyd*, p.86

<sup>117</sup> Christie, *Brown suit*, pp.247-8, 250

<sup>118</sup> Christie, *Ten little niggers* (1939; London, 1963), pp.70-2. Despite the fact that 'nigger' was judged by some to be an offensive term, other best-selling authors managed to use the word even more freely than Christie, such as Hugh Walpole; R. H. Pryce 'Niggers', in *The Times*, 30 April 1929, p.17; see also R. Kennedy, *Nigger: The strange career of a troublesome word* (New York, 2002); H. Walpole, *Jeremy* (London, 1919); Walpole, *The captives* (London, 1920); Walpole, *The cathedral* (London, 1922)

<sup>119</sup> C. Hollis, *The mind of Chesterton* (London, 1970), pp.13, 55, 102-4, 106-7

<sup>120</sup> G. K. Chesterton, 'The secret of Father Brown', in *Father Brown* (1981; London, 2001), p.259; Chesterton, 'The scandal of Father Brown', in *ibid.*, p.298

<sup>121</sup> Chesterton, *Eugenics and other evils* (1922; Seattle, WA, 2000)

<sup>122</sup> Chesterton, 'The resurrection of Father Brown', in *Father Brown*, p.95

<sup>123</sup> Chesterton, *The innocence of Father Brown* (1911; Whitefish, MT, 2004), p.84

<sup>124</sup> Hollis, *Mind of Chesterton*, p.7

<sup>125</sup> 'Mr. G. K. Chesterton', in *The Times*, 15 June 1936, p.17

The last example of a famous crime novelist who some today seek to exonerate from charges of racism is Arthur Conan Doyle. Biographer Martin Booth argues that Conan Doyle was never a racist; he merely echoed 'the thoughts of the time by which white men regarded black men as their brothers but with less evolutionary or civilised development.'<sup>126</sup> For Booth, Conan Doyle's visit to West Africa in 1881 and his meeting with the American consul at Monrovia, the former slave Henry Garnet in particular, led to his exhibiting ideas about black people that were humanist and 'well ahead of his age'.<sup>127</sup> This viewpoint is difficult to substantiate. Jinny Huh has argued that, following this meeting, Conan Doyle did not create a 'critical dialogue of nineteenth century racial constructions'; he quickly recognised and then suppressed the idea that race was a cultural tool rather than a 'truth'.<sup>128</sup> One can, however, go further. Not enough significance was attached to the meeting for him to rationally examine, and draw conclusions from, this experience. Garnet was the anomaly whose importance was insignificant when compared to the 'truth' of the wild, untamed Africa that validated a racist standpoint for Conan Doyle.

While Conan Doyle condemned the Ku Klux Klan without hesitation in one of Holmes' earliest adventures, *The five orange pips*,<sup>129</sup> the detective's world validates racist ideas. Conan Doyle drew heavily upon the criminal anthropology works by Francis Galton and Havelock Ellis among others, and consequently focused on those traits he felt made people typical of particular ethnic and social groupings, simultaneously muting the importance of idiosyncratic personal differences.<sup>130</sup> Physiognomy enables Doyle's detective to make certain

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<sup>126</sup> M. Booth, *The doctor, the detective and Arthur Conan Doyle: A biography of Arthur Conan Doyle* (London, 1997), p.75. While *The case-book of Sherlock Holmes* first appeared in 1927, the majority of Conan Doyle's works were published prior to World War One. Nonetheless, his books continued to remain popular into the interwar period, in part thanks to the publicity surrounding film adaptations such as *Sherlock Holmes* (1922) and *The adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939). Conan Doyle also provided formative reading for many interwar adults, with tales about Holmes having appeared in the popular middle-class publication *Strand*, particularly prior to 1914. The magazine then had family-wide appeal, P. D. McDonald, *British literary culture and publishing practice 1880-1914* (Cambridge, 1997), p.154

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.75-6, quote at p.76

<sup>128</sup> J. Huh, 'Whispers of Norbury: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the modernist crisis of racial (un)detection', in *Modern fiction studies* 49 (2003), pp.550-80

<sup>129</sup> A. Conan Doyle, *The adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1892; Oxford, 1993), pp.102-22

<sup>130</sup> R. Jann, *The adventures of Sherlock Holmes: Detecting social order* (New York, 1995), p.58; R. R. Thomas, 'The fingerprint of the foreigner: Colonizing the criminal body in 1890s detective



conclusions. In *The blue carbuncle*, Holmes' belief that cubic cranial capacity determines intelligence is borne out by subsequent events,<sup>131</sup> while in *The lion's mane*, Holmes states that the 'swarthy' character Ian Murdoch has a ferocious temper because 'there was some strange outlandish blood in the man'.<sup>132</sup> The 'truth' that certain personality traits were passed on via blood lineage is reiterated elsewhere.<sup>133</sup>

For Conan Doyle racial characteristics placed a limit on the extent to which change could be effected. But this does not mean he felt changes were not to be made. Throughout his career he publicly espoused a very genuine and vigorous belief in the 'global mission of the pre-eminent Anglo-Saxon race'.<sup>134</sup> Like Christie, Conan Doyle reserved his most damning descriptions for those who would seek to rise against the British Empire;<sup>135</sup> for him the Empire bestowed certain benefits upon its subject races, with democracy, sound administration and Western values to be imparted irrespective of such races' attitudes to this imposition.<sup>136</sup> It is, after all, the strength of the white man in confronting the seemingly fierce savage Steve Dixie in *The adventure of the three gables* that 'reveals' the black races for what they are – essentially child-like and simple – and thus a sustained white presence consequently removes warfare from any black agenda.<sup>137</sup>

David Daniell argues that the 'noble' Laputa in *Prester John* (1910) and other characters in Buchan's fiction must lead us to ask 'how can we support [the idea of] a so-called "racist" Buchan?'<sup>138</sup> Along this line of thinking, the idea of Buchan as a traditional 'prophet' of empire 'needs serious modification if it is to get anywhere near the truth'.<sup>139</sup> However, merely

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fiction and criminal anthropology', in *English literary history* 61 (1994), pp.655-83; Conan Doyle, *The sign of four* (1890; London, 2001), pp.8-9

<sup>131</sup> 'The blue carbuncle', in Conan Doyle, *Adventures*, pp.149-70

<sup>132</sup> 'The lion's mane', in Conan Doyle, *The case-book of Sherlock Holmes* (1927; Harmondsworth, 1951), p.187

<sup>133</sup> 'The speckled band', in Conan Doyle, *Adventures*, p.175

<sup>134</sup> McDonald, *British literary culture*, p.119

<sup>135</sup> Conan Doyle, *The sign*, pp.98-101

<sup>136</sup> Booth, *The doctor*, p.235; see also C. Higham, *The adventures of Conan Doyle: The life of the creator of Sherlock Holmes* (London, 1976), p.141

<sup>137</sup> 'The adventure of the three gables', in Conan Doyle, *Case-book*, pp.79, 81; see also Conan Doyle, *The lost world* (1912; Oxford, 1995), pp.59, 92-5

<sup>138</sup> Daniell, *The interpreter's house*, p.208; Daniell, 'Buchan and 'The Black General'', in *The black presence*, pp.135-53

<sup>139</sup> Daniell, *The interpreter's house*, p.105

because Buchan was liberal in some respects, for example in his conviction that the Dominions needed be free to follow their own destinies, thus rejecting Milnerian conceptions of federation,<sup>140</sup> it does not mean that he was ahead of his time in his racial beliefs. His depiction of Laputa, the African leader who attempts to lead a revolt against the British in *Prester John*, discredits this idea immediately. If Laputa shows any evidence of intelligence during the story this is because, despite having some Zulu blood in him, he has 'none of the squat and preposterous negro lineaments'; his hawk nose and 'cruel and resolute mouth' belied the Arab strain to his racial make-up.<sup>141</sup> When the narrator meets Laputa, it is his 'business' to

play the fool, and I believe I succeeded to admiration in the part. I blush to-day to think of the stuff I talked... I told him affectionately that I liked natives... and believed in equal rights for all men, white or coloured.<sup>142</sup>

This was not merely some sort of postmodern bluff, employed by Buchan as a means of showing how preposterous a traditional imperialist viewpoint was. The story later confirms Laputa as a sadist who only pretends to be a Christian, when his heart is really 'black with all the lusts of paganism. I knew that [in seeking to instigate a revolt against the British] his purpose was to deluge the land with blood.'<sup>143</sup> Buchan was racist in a manner that was similar to his peers.

He clearly believed there to be a ceiling to the rate at which the colonized could adopt some of the ways of the colonizer, a rate that could be managed by the British.<sup>144</sup> Nevertheless, the gap between black and white was definite. 'The most embittered employer of native labour', Buchan wrote,

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<sup>140</sup> A. Lownie, *John Buchan: The Presbyterian cavalier* (London, 1995), p.82

<sup>141</sup> J. Buchan, *Prester John* (1910; Edinburgh, 1949), p.33

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.148-9, 152, 159, 214-5, quote at p.152

<sup>144</sup> Buchan, *The African colony: Studies in the reconstruction* (London, 1903), pp.307, 309-10

does not deny that the black man should share certain social privileges, and be made to feel his place in the political organism, but he rightly denies that rights means equality of rights... Between the most ignorant white man and the black man there is fixed for the present an impassable gulf... The native... lives and moves in a mental world incredibly distant from ours.<sup>145</sup>

This state of affairs was to continue for some time.<sup>146</sup> Other ideas confirm the key place that race had in determining the limit to which Buchan felt the colonizer could become like the colonized.<sup>147</sup>

This has implications for postcolonialist ideas. Some see in the Scotsman a validation of postcolonialist conceptions of colonizer and colonized. For instance, Deak Nabers argues that *The 39 Steps* and *Greenmantle* show that the 'technologies of defining British identity' such as colonial expansion and modern standardization 'are also and at the same time the technologies of eliding the British with the rest of the world', that they both testify to the British Empire's difficulty in keeping the alien and the domestic in a stable relationship to each other.<sup>148</sup> This is to overstate the case to a considerable degree. Buchan did not have any major difficulty regarding a change in the relationship between colonizer and colonized, precisely because he felt definite boundaries existed between the two parties. A surety as to the existence of a boundary between colonizer and colonized permeated Buchan's fiction, and thus Buchan felt such assimilations as deemed necessary could occur without worry.

Regarding the changes that were to be made to those under British governance, Buchan was not a sentimental relativist. As Juanita Kruse has argued, Buchan believed that, though bringing 'civilization to the "dark races"' had its drawbacks... no price was too high for

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., pp.289-90

<sup>146</sup> J. A. Smith, *John Buchan* (London, 1965), pp.123-4

<sup>147</sup> Buchan, *The island of sheep* (1936; Thirsk, 2001), p.5

<sup>148</sup> D. Nabers, 'Spies like us: John Buchan and the Great War spy craze', in *Journal of colonialism and colonial history* 2 (2001), pp.5-28, quotation at p.28, viewed on 10 April 2005 at <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/cch/v002/2.1nabers.html>

natives to pay for the privilege of being raised from a supposedly savage state.<sup>149</sup> This was grounded in a belief in the hierarchy of peoples. Buchan has Sandy Arbuthnot, *Greenmantle's* expert on the Middle East, argue that the Arab way of life was the 'humanity of one part of the human race. It isn't ours, it isn't as good as ours, but it's jolly good all the same'.<sup>150</sup> More specifically, while Buchan believed that it was too early to tell with any certainty whether or not Africans could successfully take on board certain Western ways, any successful 'civilizing mission' was predicated upon the gradual introduction of key 'useful' Western social characteristics such as hygiene and simple forms of municipal government.<sup>151</sup> In this universalistic scale of 'good' and 'bad' Buchan agreed with friends of his such as Leo Amery.<sup>152</sup> This is understandable; after all, Buchan was a member of the establishment, the Governor-General of Canada from 1935 until his death in 1940.

Much is made of Buchan's belief that only a 'thin veneer' of civilization separated colonizer from colonized. Alan Sandison goes as far as to say this was because '[p]uritically, Buchan despises the world in which he makes his soul', the implication being that this 'thin veneer' was omnipresent because Buchan took some sort of grim pleasure in dismantling his fictional worlds.<sup>153</sup> This would appear to be compounded by Buchan's belief that the 'existence of a subject race on whatever terms is apt to lead to the deterioration in moral and mental vigour of its masters'.<sup>154</sup> However, this was not the same as 'going native'; merely that those who lived in Africa and the 'East' had to take into account that the climate inclined one towards languidity.<sup>155</sup> If this were not the case, it is difficult to see how Buchan could have allowed his hero *par excellence* Richard Hannay to operate as successfully as he did, novel after novel, given that Hannay spent extensive periods of time in Rhodesia.<sup>156</sup> As for Sandison's point, that 'good' always triumphs over 'evil' and a very evident sense of confidence that this would

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<sup>149</sup> J. Kruse, *John Buchan (1875-1940) and the idea of empire: Popular literature and political ideology* (Lewiston, New York, 1989), p.58

<sup>150</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle* (1916; Oxford, 1993), p.183

<sup>151</sup> Buchan, *The African colony*, p.307

<sup>152</sup> Buchan, *Memory hold the door* (1940; London, 1941), p.48

<sup>153</sup> A. Sandison, *The wheel of Empire: A study of the imperial idea in some late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fiction* (London, 1967), p.161

<sup>154</sup> Buchan, *The African colony*, p.285

<sup>155</sup> Buchan, *Greenmantle*, p.141

<sup>156</sup> Buchan, *The 39 Steps* (1915; Oxford, 1993), *passim*

always be the case are constant themes of Buchan's fiction.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, while he was only too keen to show the duplicity and ingenuity of those who sought to dismantle the British Empire, (and thus, for Buchan, civilization itself), to heighten the suspense of his works, the overriding tone of his writing is a faith in the ability of Britain to maintain its strength. Buchan's declaration at the very end of *Prester John* that, for as long as Britain remains aware of its 'gift of responsibility... we will rule not in Africa alone but wherever there are dark men who live only for the day and their own bellies',<sup>158</sup> is thus one of optimism - that the only thing that could ever undo the Empire is the British themselves, rather than any external threat. There is little chance of this occurring, especially if ordinary, albeit athletic and well-travelled, middle-class men could foil international conspiracies to bring down the British Empire as per *The 39 steps*.<sup>159</sup>

The pattern outlined with regards to Christie, Conan Doyle and Buchan is repeated elsewhere. For instance, one biographer has argued that since P. G. Wodehouse was a 'genius', and because 'genius does not abide by the rules that shackle the rest of us', he was 'largely unaffected' by the imperial system's 'arrogance, intolerance and other vices... The Empire offended Wodehouse's sense of tolerance.'<sup>160</sup> For others, if Wodehouse's works are not entirely clear of racial slurs, then they are, at least, 'far above the norm of his day'.<sup>161</sup> This is a position that becomes untenable if *The White Feather* (1907) is entered into the equation.<sup>162</sup> There are other instances of this modern biographical trend that cannot be detailed here for reasons of word economy.

Even if the popularity of such writers as G. A. Henty and Rider Haggard does appear to have diminished over the interwar period,<sup>163</sup> their works were still read by those late-Victorian and Edwardian children who would grow up to be interwar colonial officials, and they additionally influenced later writers such as C. S. Forester, so they require examination.

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<sup>157</sup> For example, Buchan, *The island of sheep*, p.239

<sup>158</sup> Buchan, *Prester John*, pp.293-4

<sup>159</sup> Buchan, *The 39 Steps*, passim

<sup>160</sup> B. Phelps, *P. G. Wodehouse: Man and myth* (London, 1992), p.54

<sup>161</sup> O. E. Edwards, *P. G. Wodehouse: A critical and historical essay* (London, 1977), p.48

<sup>162</sup> Wodehouse, *The White Feather* (1907; London, 1972); see also McCrum, *Wodehouse*, pp.164-5

<sup>163</sup> Compare 'Some recent books', in *The quarterly review* 490 (1926), pp.427-9 to M. Downing, 'Post-Victorian reading', in *The quarterly review* 539 (1939), p.22

One does not have to look too far in Henty's crudely-written adventure stories for confirmation of Nancy Schmidt's point that he depicted Africans as 'savages, brutal and bloodthirsty warriors, despotic rulers, naked fetish worshippers, stupid and at times wretched... nothing more than clusters of undesirable traits'.<sup>164</sup> Arabs in Africa are deemed marginally more intelligent, and are able to recognise when an Englishman beats them in an argument.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, they are obstinate, cowardly, and dishonourable; as Henty says in his role as narrator in *The dash for Khartoum*, 'humanity is not a characteristic of the Arabs'.<sup>166</sup> R. M. Ballantyne produced similar work to Henty. Interestingly, in describing the the Mahdist army in the Sudan, he attempted to give the impression of knowing what those whom his heroes fought against were thinking, but neutralised this by confirming that the British were actually working for the best interests of those they fought against:

Shall we deny to those men what we claim for ourselves – love of hearth and home, of country, of freedom? Can we not sympathise with men who groaned under... [a] tyrannical yoke, and who, failing to understand or appreciate the purity of the motives by which we British were actuated, could see nothing in us except the supporters of their enemies?<sup>167</sup>

In *Blue lights*, Ballantyne's hero Miles Milton loses his left hand as a result of a battle in the field, but the story ends with Milton happily married and with a large amount of money inherited courtesy of a will from a benefactor who he met in the Sudan.<sup>168</sup>

How did this influence the straightforward adventure stories of the interwar period? C. S. Forester was both a very well-known writer and highly regarded by critics.<sup>169</sup> His bestseller *The African queen* (1935) is a tale of an unlikely duo, a Cockney mechanic and the sister of a

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<sup>164</sup> N. J. Schmidt, 'The writer as teacher: A comparison of the African adventure stories of G. A. Henty, Rene Guillot, and Barbara Kimenye', in *African studies review* 19 (1976), pp.69, 71

<sup>165</sup> Henty, *The dash for Khartoum*, pp.285, 323

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.124, 140, 236, 292

<sup>167</sup> R. M. Ballantyne, *Blue lights or: Hot work in the Soudan* (London, 1888), p.245

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p.396

<sup>169</sup> For example, 'New novels: A cavalry officer', in *The Times*, 5 June 1936, p.7; 'Notable novels: The 'best-sellers'', in *The Times*, 24 July 1936, p.9

dead missionary, trapped in German East Africa during World War One. The pair eventually manage to get to safety despite facing extreme heat, insects, malaria and being shot at by German troops. The age-old assumptions concerning race and empire are there. For instance, the ordeals the pair overcome are taken as proof enough of an imperial vitality, for if 'English explorers had turned back at the sight of apparent impossibilities the British Empire would not be nearly its present size.'<sup>170</sup> The same sort of pre-1914 imagery is manifested elsewhere. For instance, the works of the American author Edgar Rice Burroughs, who enjoyed considerable success in Britain with his *Tarzan* novels, suggest that internal characteristics can be determined by a simple observation of external ones.<sup>171</sup>

Burroughs' novels hint at an important point. However tentative any such move must be, it is worth looking briefly at American fiction more widely. This is because it was assumed at the time that America was increasingly influencing certain facets of British social life, with its jazz music and alleged 'loose morals'.<sup>172</sup> It is thus possible that fiction had an impact upon the reading habits of the British middle classes. The background to interwar writing in the United States was a political and social landscape polarized on racial issues to a far greater extent than was contemporaneously the case in Britain; certain sections of American society were at this time undergoing a 'crisis in the development of modern whiteness', a crisis especially marked between the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 and the Scottsboro trial of 1931, and which led to violence during the anti-black 'Red Summer' riots of 1919.<sup>173</sup> Anti-black fervour increased in the years immediately before World War One, finding expression in the works of American writers such as Thomas Dixon.<sup>174</sup> On the other hand, W. E. B. Du Bois was a prominent member of a

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<sup>170</sup> C. S. Forester, *The African queen* (1935; Harmondsworth, 1956), p.121

<sup>171</sup> B. Street, 'Reading the novels of empire: Race and ideology in the classic 'tale of adventure'', in *The black presence*, pp.98-100

<sup>172</sup> For example, 'Is America really civilized?', in *The Times*, 4 July 1922, p.8; 'Jazz music', in *The Times*, 26 September 1927, p.8

<sup>173</sup> R. B. Duplessis, *Genders, races, and religious cultures in modern American poetry, 1908-1934* (Cambridge, 2001), pp.83, 85, quote at p.83

<sup>174</sup> M. Bloomfield, 'Dixon's *The leopard's spots*: A study in popular racism', in *American Quarterly* 16 (1964), pp.387-401; J. D. Edwards, *Gothic passages: Racial ambiguity and the American gothic* (Iowa City, 2003), p.91; see also traditionally physiognomically racist works such as D. Hammett, *The glass key* (1931; London, 2002), pp.86-9

small group of intellectual activists who denounced racial prejudice.<sup>175</sup> Some of the works produced by white authors at this time display a tension borne out of a consideration of both of these camps, and out of pressing worries as to the best way to deal with the rise of educated African-Americans. Poet Vachel Lindsay painted a highly contradictory picture of Africa; in 1914 his work simultaneously suggested that Africa could and could not be changed by imperialism.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, by the end of the 'twenties Robert Penn Warren had moved from an earlier uncritical deployment of racial stereotypes to an increasingly 'self-conscious, often discomfiting' inquiry into the strength of race in determining an individual's identity.<sup>177</sup>

Nevertheless, such inquiries did not impact upon British audiences, and neither did the works of those American writers who are popular today. Ernest Hemingway dealt with Africa in a good deal of detail in both his fiction and non-fiction. However, the degree to which he found an audience in interwar Britain can be exaggerated, and when he did, the subtleties of his text were obscured by the attractive nature of the adventures mentioned. For example, *The Times* believed that his *Green hills of Africa* was a book 'full of the thrills of big-game shooting and the author's creed that life should be lived and enjoyed to the uttermost'.<sup>178</sup>

So what of that other American writer of the 'twenties now regarded as pre-eminent, F. Scott Fitzgerald? Fitzgerald was privately highly racist, ranting to friends that the idea of blacks attaining racial 'equality' with whites was 'gibberish', and that Europe was only 'a few years behind Tyre and Babylon. The Negroid streak creeps northwards to defile the Nordic

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<sup>175</sup> On Du Bois, D. L. Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The fight for equality and the American century, 1919-1963* (New York, 2000) is immense and beautifully written. See especially *ibid.*, pp.13-5, 111-4, 190. It is interesting to note that Du Bois and many of his colleagues believed that it would be several decades before Africans would be capable of ruling themselves; *ibid.*, p.114

<sup>176</sup> Duplessis, *Genders*, pp.86-90

<sup>177</sup> A. Szczesiul, *Racial politics and Robert Penn Warren's poetry* (Gainseville, Florida, 2002), pp.8-71, especially pp.58-61, quote at p.11

<sup>178</sup> 'Travel in Europe', in *The Times*, 24 July 1936, p.9



race. Already, the Italians have the souls of blackamoors.’<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, ‘evidently sensing some change in the political weather’ of the US, he played this down in public, going as far as to pin an advocacy of fears about a ‘Black Peril’ upon the unpleasant Tom Buchanan in *The great Gatsby*.<sup>180</sup> On the rare occasion that he was reviewed on British soil, Fitzgerald’s negativity was felt to be extreme and unreal; the one aspect of the haunting *Tender is the night* that inclined *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer Geoffrey West to take the work seriously was the ‘real tenderness’ of the relationship between two of the principal characters, Dick and Nicole Diver.<sup>181</sup> At any rate, Fitzgerald did not sell in anything like significant numbers in the US, let alone Britain, until his death in 1940.<sup>182</sup>

Those who came up with radically new ideas about race and Africa were fringe elements in interwar Britain. Guided by the critical responses of the time, rather than what we think of such interwar innovators today, we can see that they wielded no cultural influence outside of small groups of intellectuals. Those who sought to reject race and traditional interpretations of Africa were ahead of their time.<sup>183</sup> James Joyce and those like him were derided as confused and incomprehensible, while it was felt that others such as Virginia Woolf were confrontational but said things that were felt to be counter to commonsense. Stanford Rosenbaum’s point that the reaction of the mainstream to Bloomsbury ideas show just how ‘impervious the institution of imperialism was to criticism’<sup>184</sup> is thus a pertinent one. There was a minority of modernist writers who formed the acceptable limit to how far most felt fiction could or should go, of whom Joseph Conrad was the most notable example. And yet

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<sup>179</sup> Quoted in J. R. Mellow, *Invented lives: F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald* (1984; London, 1985), pp.438, 138 respectively; see also *ibid.*, p.419; T. Buttitta, *The lost summer: A personal memoir of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (1974; Sevenoaks, 1988), pp.21-2, 31

<sup>180</sup> Mellow, *Invented lives*, pp.142, 438; F. S. Fitzgerald, *The great Gatsby* (1926; London, 1994), p.19, see also p.130

<sup>181</sup> May, *Critical times*, p.202. Even this relationship ends in divorce; Fitzgerald, *Tender is the night* (1934; London, 1986). *The Times* reviewer deemed it an ‘unhappy novel about unhappy people’, rather than a critique of a particular society as a whole; ‘New novels’, in *The Times*, 14 September 1934, p.7. Another American modernist initially sidelined in a similar manner by the British press was William Faulkner, whose *The sound and the fury* employs a stream of consciousness style and is written from four viewpoints; W. Faulkner, *The sound and the fury* (1929; London, 1995); May, *Critical times*, pp.202-3

<sup>182</sup> N. Tredell (ed.), *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The great Gatsby* (New York, 1997), pp.7, 11-40

<sup>183</sup> G. Rowland, ‘Oh brave new world’, in *The Cornhill Magazine* 155 (1937), p.124; H. Pile, ‘Egyptian envoi’, in *The Cornhill Magazine* 155 (1937), p.411

<sup>184</sup> Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury*, Volume Two, p.433

even he, for a variety of reasons, was understood very differently to how many see him today. To interwar Britain, he was not the anti-imperialist some now take him for.

Those revisionists who have sought to downplay the racist nature of various mainstream interwar writers such as Agatha Christie are incorrect, because such authors subscribed to the idea of a hierarchy of races without any qualms. In addition, those works that were championed by the majority were traditional in their advocacy of empire. In the interwar period the adventure fiction of authors such as John Buchan were not viewed as being rent with the ambiguity that some now see. The British majority could not conceive of how to criticise anything other than minor facets of the empire. It loomed too large in their vision as a force for 'good' for there to be any question of this occurring. Thus, contrary to Lively and others, who state that fictional works were sites of deep-seated inquiry, they were instead sources of reassurance. They contained exactly the sorts of assumptions the middle and upper-middle classes already carried with them as a result of the ideas that non-fictional works had already propagated. These non-fiction works acknowledged that race was not the sole determinant of a person's characteristics, but maintained that it was the most important one. This understanding of race facilitated the view that Africans and other peoples of the world could be changed for the 'better', but that there was a brake upon the rate at which such changes could be made and, for most, that a ceiling existed above which Africans could not develop. Non-fictional and fictional representations of race and of Africa joined with a British imperial confidence in a way that has crucial ramifications for our understanding of metropolitan discussions of imperial policy, which is the focus of chapter three.

## Factors combined: The limits of ambiguity

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Expositions on indirect rule - Lugard's *The dual mandate* of 1922 in particular - are taken by some to favour a status quo in Africa. Interwar elite commentators' near-universal advocacy of the use of indigenous chiefs over 'Westernized' Africans for governance is primarily taken by modern scholars as part of a relativistic British attempt to seal the continent off from developments and concomitant worries omnipresent elsewhere in the world, part of a wider reluctance to allow change to occur.<sup>1</sup> This is problematic. British ideas on Africa as expounded by interwar commentators - pre-eminent governmental elites past and present, missionaries, anthropologists and so on - were more enthusiastic about change in content and more self-confident in their belief that they could make such change occur, than one might initially believe.

As the previous chapters have pointed out, even if tubthumping had begun to recede after 1918, the swagger that underpinned the actions of the late-Victorian imperialists had yet to dissipate. There was a strong residual faith in the value of the 'civilizing mission'. Despite any difficulties felt to have emerged in the running of an African empire, those in positions of discursive authority were sure of their ability to mould Africa along lines they best saw fit, provided they were given the time to do so. With this in mind, the traditional claim that the British moved from a reluctant adoption of, or even opposition to, development in the early

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<sup>1</sup> This concentration upon the 'reactionary' side of indirect rule is widespread; see, for example, R. Hyam, *Britain's imperial century, 1815-1914: A study of Empire and expansion* (1976; Basingstoke, 1993), p.269; Daly, *Imperial Sudan: The Anglo-Egyptian condominium, 1934-1956* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.26-9. For a different view of indirect rule in Nigeria at the very start of the twentieth century, see E. Isichei, *The Ibo people and the Europeans: The genesis of a relationship - to 1906* (London, 1973), pp.160-1

'twenties to an enthusiastic proactivism in changing Africa by the mid- to late-'thirties requires modification.<sup>2</sup> Any such move was a question of extent rather than a whole-scale shift from an endorsement of stasis to one of change.

Where some such as Anthony Nwabughuogo have argued that indirect rule was held onto with a near-religious idealistic fervour,<sup>3</sup> others believe that it was borne out of economic necessity. But merely because to administer indirectly was cheaper than doing so directly does not mean that the British were not genuine in advocating other advantages in pursuing the policy. It was conceived of as a means of maintaining societal stability whilst simultaneously allowing for the reform of those aspects of African society that were felt by the British to be abhorrent, or simply no longer required if Africa was to be altered for the 'better'. The British were to work 'behind the scenes' so that any changes they felt necessary would be more readily acceptable to Africans, on the grounds that change was best mediated via a chief.

To this end, the degree to which indirect rule represented a total policy from which there could be no deviation also requires addressing. Some modern scholars argue that indirect rule represented something set in stone, which sacrificed pragmatism at the expense of idealism.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, Ormsby-Gore and Margery Perham, among other contemporaries, argued that one strength of the policy was its ability to adapt to local conditions.<sup>5</sup> Thus it is necessary, if laborious, to go through various individuals' ideas as to the meaning of indirect rule. It will be argued that, due to the influence of a small number of elite commentators upon a wider community of journalists, popular academics and so on, there was relatively little discrepancy between differing ideas as to what indirect rule meant. This is not to say that all

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, David Anderson has argued that there was an increased focus among the British in land productivity in Africa in the 1930s, which was part and parcel of a new, wider interest in developmental interventionism; D. Anderson, 'Depression, dust bowl, demography, and drought: The colonial state and soil conservation in East Africa during the 1930s', in *African Affairs* 83 (1984), p.322

<sup>3</sup> Nwabughuogo, 'The role of propaganda', *passim*

<sup>4</sup> For example, A. I. Nwabughuogo, 'The role of propaganda in the development of Indirect Rule in Nigeria, 1890-1929', in *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 14 (1981), p.66

<sup>5</sup> L. S. Amery and Ormsby-Gore, 'Problems and development in Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 28 (1929), pp.335-6; M. Perham, 'A re-statement of indirect rule', in *Africa* 7 (1934), p.334; see also D. Cameron, 'Governor's tour through Mwanza Province: Report' [1928], CO 691/100/20/10

officials acted in the field in accordance with such ideas, or even fully understood them, but this is a matter for the second half of this study. What matters here are the ideas that were being presented to the rank and file of the middle- and upper-middle classes for consumption.

In contrast to the belief that indirect rule equalled stasis, some have argued that the British approach to Africa was riven with tension. For example, the views of Donald Cameron, governor of Tanganyika from 1925 until he took up the equivalent post in Nigeria in 1931, are deemed 'paradoxical' by James Graham because the administrator believed that 'Tanganyika had to be trained in, yet protected from, the ways of the modern world through indirect rule.'<sup>6</sup> Barbara Bush has argued that Lugard's memos are 'riddled with logical inconsistencies and contradictions' because his 'objective was to bring the "benefits of civilisation" with as little interference as possible in African laws and customs'.<sup>7</sup> Others have made similar points with respect to different areas of British policy in Africa.<sup>8</sup> However, it will be shown that interwar commentators offered up what they genuinely deemed were coherent ideas as to how to both develop Africa and yet retain intact certain of its 'pre-colonial' aspects. This coherency sprang from a fusion of three strands of belief. Two of these, a faith in a British ability to both enact development and that race informed where change was and was not to take place, have already been examined. Additionally, there was a strong sense that Africa was hardy, that it would robustly adapt to reform. That such a consistency might be untenable was not something that Britons were prompted to ask of themselves. This is not to say that there was a total absence of people that felt they were highly contradictory in their approach to Africa, but that these were men of limited influence. A certainty prevailed.

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<sup>6</sup> J. D. Graham, 'Indirect Rule: The establishment of "chiefs" and "tribes" in Cameron's Tanganyika', in *Tanzania notes and records* 77 (1976), p.3

<sup>7</sup> Bush, *Imperialism, race and resistance*, p.34; see also M. Z. Booth, 'Settler, missionary, and the state: Contradictions in the formulation of educational policy in colonial Swaziland', in *History of education* 32 (2003), pp.35-56

<sup>8</sup> M. Crowder, *West Africa under colonial rule* (London, 1968), p.171; T. Spear, 'Neo-traditionalism and the limits of invention in British colonial Africa', in *Journal of African history* 44 (2003), pp.3-27; D. Bivona, *British imperial literature, 1870-1940* (Cambridge, 1998), p.158; Bush and J. Maltby, 'Taxation in West Africa: Transforming the colonial subject into the "governable person"', *Critical perspectives in accounting* 15 (2004), pp.17, 20, 23-4

The commentators to be examined here were not, in the main, rank and file officials; colonial officials did not feed their ideas directly back into mainstream circulation. Clause 57 of the Regulations for His Majesty's Colonial Service stated that an officer was not allowed to have any dealings with the press without the express permission of his Governor or the Secretary of State, except publishing 'in his own name matter relating to subjects of general interest', that is, nothing political or administrative in nature.<sup>9</sup> Once retired many wrote of their experiences. Some of these works will be examined below but, in the main, the opinions of the rank and file were presented to the metropole only when mediated via others such as Margery Perham.

Once these commentators have been examined, there are a couple of issues that will require resolution. The first of these is the matter of adventure. Some have argued that a British sentimentalist belief in the Rousseauian 'noble savage' and Africa as the exciting 'dark continent' introduced discomfort into the developmental equation.<sup>10</sup> In this point they seemingly have the support of conclusions that can be drawn from the works of Rider Haggard and his successors, whereby 'pre-civilization' Africa was a fun and interesting place to be. From these, the argument goes, it was a short hop to the conclusion that to change Africa was to destroy its essence. However, an enthusiastic advocacy of innovation cut off the emergence of such a view before a point at which faith in British activity was undermined. Instead it was British activity in Africa that was exciting. Britain was changing things for the better, it was argued, and it was this act of forcing transition from 'dark' to 'light' that captured the interwar imagination. The excitement at the prospect of engendering change, though it might look odd today, was no less genuine for this, and heavily outweighed any reverence for an African past. This is especially the case because those elements of the past that were conceived of as 'bad', such as war and poverty, were felt to be detachable from

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<sup>9</sup> 'Permission to publish two articles on economic resources and native administration in T[anganyika] T[erritory]', CO 691/152/13/2. Some of those few colonial officials who left and then published works on Africa, such as W. R. Crocker, have already been examined above, while a small number of others produced works on topics such as human geography; Popplewell, 'Random recollections', RHO Mss.Afr.s.2156/38; Popplewell and T. E. Harcus, 'Notes on the geography of the Tunduru District of Tanganyika Territory', in *Geographical Journal* 91 (1938), pp.31-43

<sup>10</sup> Bush, *Imperialism, race and resistance*, pp.28-34

those that were felt to be 'good', namely the tribal system, the aesthetic of African life, and so on. Much of Africa's past was looked upon in a negative light by the majority, and it did not sadden the British to see themselves as the ones who had been charged with reconfiguring the continent.

The other issue of note concerns Africa's future. A case could be made that the British had, at the back of their minds, an issue with the development of Africa, because they felt that they were therein sowing the seeds of their own downfall as supreme upon the continent. While British ideas as to Africa's future were varied, none of these precipitated any issue with development. Among those who believed in a low 'racial ceiling', which limited the extent to which the African could develop, there was no issue with any partial assimilation because this could never lead to independence. On the other hand, among those who felt that Africa would attain self-determination one day in a distant future, it was believed that independent African nations would join the Commonwealth, thereby perpetuating the Empire, albeit in an altered form, as a community of economic and emotional solidarity. There were others who refused to conjecture as to the continent's future, because a radical change to the relationship between ruler and ruled was deemed to be such a long way off. Nothing seriously disrupted a British faith in the inherent 'good' of what they were doing in Africa, not even thoughts of the future.

After his retirement from active service in the continent in November 1918, Lord Lugard remained a highly respected commentator on African affairs. In the face of the opinions of those who argue that Lugard was keen on preserving the status quo in Africa as far as possible, much in *The dual mandate* calls for the assimilation of Africans to Western practices and beliefs. It was the 'task of civilisation' to 'put an end to slavery, to establish Courts of Law, to inculcate in the natives a sense of individual responsibility, of liberty, and of justice, and to teach their rulers how to apply these principles'.<sup>11</sup> 'To the twentieth century', he wrote, 'belongs the heritage of the tropics and the task of their development'.<sup>12</sup> In fact, he considered

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<sup>11</sup> Lugard, *The dual mandate in British tropical Africa*, (1922; Edinburgh, 1926), pp.5, 93, see also p.608

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6

change a necessity. Because European rule in Africa 'must inevitably tend to break down the old tribal discipline', the British administrator must 'accelerate the slow process of evolution, from the most primitive stage of the family group - which owes no other allegiance than the patriarchal - through the tribal stage, to the stage where the authority of a chief is recognised.'<sup>13</sup> Once this stage is reached, the community may 'without much difficulty, and practically without any radical upsetting of the tribal code of discipline' adopt 'standards and methods more in accord with our ideas of justice and of efficiency'.<sup>14</sup> Thus, while 'we have to admit that the first impact of civilisation on barbarism... is bound at first to produce some untoward results, we may find encouragement and promise for the future in the undeniable alleviation of human suffering which it has also brought.'<sup>15</sup> No plan for reform was perfect, but some were clearly better than others. Turbulence was a necessary rite of passage of a paternalistic plan, but a minor one.<sup>16</sup>

An emphasis upon change had been there from the beginning of Lugard's writing career. In 1893, he had written that the

nature of the African... is not of that stamp which chafes at the yoke, like the nations of Teutonic blood. Let us accept all this, and clear the ground of all high-coloured nonsense - of 'kingly hearts' beating in the bosoms of slaves...

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<sup>13</sup> Lugard, 'Problems of Equatorial Africa', in *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 6 (1927), pp.218-9; see also Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.217

<sup>14</sup> Lugard, 'Problems', p.219

<sup>15</sup> Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.93, see also p.153

<sup>16</sup> As far as it is possible to tell, it seems that Lugard was genuine in what he said. The emotional fervour around which his letters and articles were often built demonstrates Lugard was convinced that the British colonial official had the best interests of the African at heart. Regarding the attempts made by white settlers in Kenya to obtain more power for themselves, he argued that it was 'opposed to all British tradition and to justice that a small minority should be vested with political power over a vast majority whose interests must inevitably in some matters be opposed to their own.' It is difficult to see how he could have made such claims had he not believed that, elsewhere in Africa, British colonial officials were a minority whose own interests were *not* opposed to those of the majority they ruled over; Lugard, 'The constitution of Kenya, and the federation of the East African dependencies', August 1927, CO 822/1/8/9; see also Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.117



and taking the African as he is – as centuries of wrongs have made him – apply ourselves to raise him to a higher level.<sup>17</sup>

A frame of mind, then, that was both racially-defined and strictly paternalist – Lugard claimed that ‘negroes’ have the ‘virtues and defects of... attractive children<sup>18</sup> – but nonetheless more attached to change than subsequent generations have deemed. And change would occur. ‘Some day’, he wrote to Sir William Gowers, the Governor of Uganda, in 1929, ‘there will be thousands of Africans qualified by any test which can be applied to Europeans, for a share in the government’.<sup>19</sup>

This strain of argument was maintained alongside the idea that Africans were to remain true to their cultural and political heritage by preserving ‘that which was best’ in indigenous custom. Indeed, this was felt the most efficient manner by which change could be effected, because direct rule ‘shirks the more difficult task of education, and when the time comes – as it inevitably will come – and the people demand a voice of control in their own affairs, we shall find [if direct rule is carried out]... that we have destroyed the natural institutions of the country’.<sup>20</sup> Lugard’s firm belief that Africans should remain ‘rooted’ in Africa was reinforced by statements claiming scientific objectivity, such as the idea that the Europeanized African of the coast was less fertile and more susceptible to disease than the ‘normal’ African,<sup>21</sup> which tied in with his Mendelian belief that it was of ‘vital necessity’ to maintain ‘the purity of race-types’.<sup>22</sup> Once again, such strains of thought had been there from the start.<sup>23</sup>

How were the two – a faith in the validity of change and the necessity of an adherence to ‘racially’-bequeathed tradition – internally consistent? The very ‘existence’ of racial types provides the answer, and a clear demarcation of that which was to be changed, and that

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<sup>17</sup> Lugard, *The rise of our East African empire* (Edinburgh, 1893), Volume One, p.28, see also pp.71, 73-5, 192, 283-4; this is very similar to the beliefs expressed in Plomer, *Cecil Rhodes*, pp.125-6

<sup>18</sup> Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.70

<sup>19</sup> Lugard to Gowers, 9 April 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1150(1)/21

<sup>20</sup> Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.219

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.79-80

<sup>22</sup> Lugard, ‘The colour problem’, p.269

<sup>23</sup> Lugard, *The rise*, Volume One, pp.310, see also pp.382-3

which was to remain in line with the 'traditional'. What Lugard wanted in Africa was a stable 'inter-relation of colour', where there was

complete uniformity in ideals, absolute equality in the paths of knowledge and culture, equal opportunity for those who strive, equal admiration for those who achieve; in matters social and racial a separate path, each pursuing his own inherited traditions, preserving his own race-purity and race-pride; equality in things spiritual; agreed divergence in the physical and material.<sup>24</sup>

In *The dual mandate* Lugard elaborated upon this convergence of the universal and the specific when he noted that principles 'do not change, but their mode of application may and should vary with the customs, the traditions, and the prejudices of each unit'.<sup>25</sup> This is a crucial point, allowing as it did a stable model of change to exist within a framework of a societal system tied to cultural stasis or, at least, a stasis that was to be reached once traditional systems had been 'reformed'. Such a vantage point was borne of a well-established philosophical stance; some Enlightenment thinkers had believed that 'moral universalism was not incommensurate with cultural pluralism'.<sup>26</sup> Thus, while Lugard felt that 'the day is long past since we could assume that our own particular systems were the best for all the world', the aim of the British was to 'adapt the African to civilised standards (or adapt those standards to his comprehension and needs)'.<sup>27</sup>

The changes felt necessary by the young Lugard could be made at a decent rate, given that '[n]o kind of men I have ever met with... are more amenable to discipline, more ready to fall into the prescribed groove willingly and quickly, more easy to handle, or require so little compulsion as the African... On the whole, the African is very quick at learning'.<sup>28</sup> A youthful

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<sup>24</sup> Lugard, 'The colour problem', p.283; later reiterated in Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.87

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp.193-4

<sup>26</sup> F. Wheen, *How mumbo-jumbo conquered the world: A short history of modern delusions* (London, 2004), p.189

<sup>27</sup> Lugard, 'Studying our primitive races: How the administrator gains from anthropology's new insight into tribal life', in *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1934, p.8

<sup>28</sup> Lugard, *The rise*, Volume One, p.473, see also pp.477-9, 488

exuberance, and the fact that *The rise of our East African Empire* reads like a propagandist clarion call from an early colonizer for greater attention to be placed upon the region, account for the enthusiasm that saturates this prose, which undoubtedly became more muted in the following years.

Differences between the Lugard of 1893 and of the 'twenties are, however, not to be overstated. The same essentials of thought were there, though as an older man Lugard advocated a slightly slower rate of change. In 1925 he argued that, in introducing partial regional autonomy, at first judges were to be closely supervised and have little power, for they would initially lack impartiality and accept dubious evidence, but that 'they will grow and learn, often with surprising rapidity'.<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere he pointed to the existence of quick changes, and of the 'phenomenal progress' made in the area of economic development, which he believed had improved the African quality of life.<sup>30</sup> Such rapidity was imperative in certain areas of life; for example the diffusion of education, particularly among the sons of native rulers, was necessary 'to avoid the present danger of a separate educated ['coastal'] class... in rivalry with the accepted rulers of the people.'<sup>31</sup> Lugard was not opposed to education and change *per se*, but rather to some of the 'products' that this education and change had produced. Nevertheless, such assimilation and the preparation for self-government was to take place over a long period of time.<sup>32</sup> For Lugard, those who had examined the continent correctly would realize that African self-determination was not even 'visible on the horizon of time'.<sup>33</sup>

Once again, how were two seemingly disparate beliefs – a faith in both the rapid development of the African and in the idea that a long time would pass before Africans would be capable of looking after their own affairs – reconciled by Lugard? This time the question is easier to answer, the solution lying in the fact that Lugard thought such rapid developments to be occurring at a local level; such regional autonomy, (or, at least, partially

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<sup>29</sup> Lugard, 'Education in tropical Africa', in *The Edinburgh Review* 242 (1925), p.15

<sup>30</sup> Lugard, 'The basis of the claim for colonies', in *International Affairs* 15 (1936), p.5; Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.498

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.426

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.85, 91, 96

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.197-8

devolved responsibility for governance), was a very different matter to the running of an entire country. Therefore Lugard's developmental scheme remained internally consistent. The African could learn to look after himself at a local level, dealing with the implementation of justice and the establishment of other social characteristics more in keeping with what was felt amenable to the British, whilst the imperialist continued to look after the country's dealings with the outside world. This was felt to be in the interests of Africans and Britons alike, both benefiting from the maintenance of economic ties with the continent that the imperialist could ensure came about.

Before taking up his post as governor of Tanganyika, Donald Cameron worked in Nigeria under both Lugard and Hugh Clifford. Cameron had issues with what he deemed to be Lugard's *ad hoc* manner of governance, and Lugard later broke off letter-writing contact with Cameron when the latter advocated the reduction of the power held by local officials by establishing a High Court in place of provincial ones.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Cameron was largely in accord with his ex-superior as to what indirect rule entailed. He was more comprehensive than Lugard in putting forward reasons why it was felt necessary that Africans retain their own tribal and cultural forms,<sup>35</sup> but his plan was nonetheless similar. Its central thesis again stemmed from the belief that a reform and subsequent maintenance of 'traditional' tribal authority was the best means of effecting change. Once again, the essence of Cameron's thought was that a universalistic moral code should underpin and alter localised cultural forms, that 'the most vital principle of my conception' of indirect rule was that the British should use Africans' 'own indigenous institutions in order to promote higher standards of civilisation among them', that 'the trust we repose [in the chiefs]... in the administration of their local affairs must be exercised gradually and progressively in accordance with the more enlightened standards of modern civilisation'.<sup>36</sup> By 'gradually purging native laws and customs of all that offends against justice and morality', by convincing local leaders that

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<sup>34</sup> Cameron to C. Bottomley, 28 September 1933, CO 583/191/3/23

<sup>35</sup> Cameron, *The principles of native administration and their application* (Lagos, 1934), p.4, see also p.31

<sup>36</sup> Cameron, 'Native administration in Tanganyika and Nigeria', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36 (1937), p.9; see also 'Colonial governor: Sir Donald Cameron's memoirs', in *The Times*, 24 February 1939, p.22

oppression was not a sound method of governance and that the emergence of notions of individual responsibility, ambition and development was necessary, it was possible to give the African a share in the government of his country. This change could be introduced in a stable manner as a result of the lines of demarcation provided by race, which was felt to inform policymakers as to what should be changed and what should not; the aim was to change the 'content', but not the 'packaging' of African life.<sup>37</sup>

For Cameron, therefore, indirect rule was not solely tied to stasis. He felt that such a system of governance was better than direct rule, because it was a more intensive form of governance that got more done. 'Paradoxical as it may seem', he wrote to the Colonial Office, 'although indirect has replaced direct administration, there is a great deal more administration than there was before.'<sup>38</sup> This was no false paying of lip service to a long-rejected 'civilizing mission' ideal. Like Lugard, Cameron was certainly not of the opinion that the African was to be held in isolation from the rest of the world. Had he been, he would not have contacted *The Times* in 1930 asking for people to donate books written in English to Tanganyika for the benefit of educated Africans.<sup>39</sup> Nor would he have written to the Secretary of State for Colonies, Philip Cunliffe-Lister, arguing that because the post of Awujale of Ijebu-Ode had fallen vacant, there was an opportunity for a more modern form of local council to be instituted so that educated Ijebus could be represented, a point he made in public with respect to Africans more generally.<sup>40</sup> The emphasis, however, was upon gradual reform; given that 'there is sometimes a temptation to look for too high a standard in the native chief. The centuries which lie between ourselves and the native in point of development cannot be bridged in a generation or two'.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, Cameron squared his idea that it would be many years before Africans would be capable of looking after their own affairs with a belief

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<sup>37</sup> Cameron, *Principles*, pp.5, 8

<sup>38</sup> Cameron, 'Mwanza Province: Report', CO 691/100/20/11

<sup>39</sup> Cameron, 'Books for Africa', in *The Times*, 30 October 1930, p.10

<sup>40</sup> Cameron to P. Cunliffe-Lister, 12 April 1933, CO 583/191/3/28-9; Cameron, 'Native administration', p.12

<sup>41</sup> Cameron, *Principles*, p.28

in their rapid development in a manner similar to Lugard and other governors, such as Sir Alexander Ransford Slater, who was charged with the Gold Coast from 1927 until 1932.<sup>42</sup>

Cameron saw no tension in local African rulers being educated by the British, having 'no doubt at all' that the latter would not damage structures run by the former. If chiefs were made aware of the fact that their position was held on trust from the British, patient and tactful officials would be able to uphold the move to civility at a stable rate.<sup>43</sup> Giving Africans local autonomy would have the added benefit of 'building up a bulwark against political agitators.'<sup>44</sup> Such agitators were those Western-educated Africans who were uncritical in their acceptance of European customs – the 'pathetic results' of detribalisation – who, for Cameron, discredited the value of a wholly-assimilationist educational policy.<sup>45</sup> While it was only following Cameron's succession by Sir Bernard Bourdillon in 1935 that any head of the Nigerian administration started to show prolonged sympathy towards the concerns of these 'pathetic results', even Bourdillon still adhered to the key principles of indirect rule.<sup>46</sup>

Similar to Bourdillon, Gordon Guggisberg, who administered the Gold Coast between 1919 and 1927, is another elite governor who has been presented as far ahead of his time.<sup>47</sup> However, the key difference between him and his peers was the rate at which he wanted change to take place, rather than the way things were to be altered. He advocated developments such as the Takoradi Harbour and Achimota College, but remained a convinced 'indirect ruler' who stressed gradualism in the devolution of local powers.<sup>48</sup>

Differences in approach to policy between governmental elites have thus been overstated. For example, S. J. S. Cookey believes that the ideas and actions of Hugh Clifford were

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<sup>42</sup> For example, Cameron, 'Native administration', p.18; R. Slater, 'The Gold Coast of to-day', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 27 (1928), pp.321-8; see also H. MacMichael, *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* (London, 1934), p.101

<sup>43</sup> Cameron, 'Native administration', p.15

<sup>44</sup> Cameron, 'Position and prospects in Tanganyika', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 26 (1927), p.319

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p.318

<sup>46</sup> R. D. Pearce, 'Governors, nationalists, and constitutions in Northern Nigeria, 1935-51', in *JICH* 9 (1981), pp.289-91

<sup>47</sup> This idea is sometimes rehashed rather unthinkingly; H. B. Goodall, *Beloved imperialist: Sir Gordon Guggisberg governor of the Gold Coast* (Bishop Auckland, 1998), but see T. D. Williams, 'Sir Gordon Guggisberg and educational reform in the Gold Coast', in *Comparative education review* 8 (1964), pp.290-306

<sup>48</sup> Wraith, *Guggisberg*, pp.178-9, 191

different to those of his predecessor as governor of Nigeria, Lord Lugard, because Clifford was pro-development and Lugard was not.<sup>49</sup> Clifford, Cookey argues, faced opposition from the Colonial Office, at that time headed by Milner, who had

not fully grasped the intricacy of the issues which the opposing sides were addressing; for “development” also implied western education and hence the potential for breeding nationalist agitators who would assuredly demand independence.<sup>50</sup>

Against this, there is Michael Crowder’s argument that whereas Lugard espoused an ‘interventionist’ form of indirect rule, his successors such as Clifford were ‘non-interventionist’ in attitude.<sup>51</sup> And, somewhere in the middle, a case has been made that Clifford was constantly riven by tension over what to do.<sup>52</sup> However, while they undoubtedly differed over the timescale by which development could take place, the difference between Clifford and Lugard was in degree, rather than in kind. Clifford stated quite plainly that what Lugard undertook when he set about ‘modifying, not the indigenous system itself, but the manner and methods of its operation’ was correct.<sup>53</sup> In believing that ‘the preservation of indigenous systems was not incompatible with the task of economic development’, and that Africans should not become ‘an imitation of the European, but... remain essentially “an African who had acquired from Europeans the best that their moral and social codes can give, yet has never stooped to secure these things by sacrificing... his self-respect or his racial individuality”’, the pervading interwar influence of Lugardian thought once again asserted itself.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> S. J. S. Cookey, ‘Sir Hugh Clifford as Governor of Nigeria: An evaluation’, in *African affairs* 79 (1980), p.532

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.538, see also p.537

<sup>51</sup> Crowder, *West Africa*, p.169

<sup>52</sup> Which, the argument goes, stems from his time in the Straits Settlements and Malaya; P. Holden, *Modern subjects/colonial texts: Hugh Clifford and the discipline of English literature in the Straits Settlements and Malaya 1895-1907* (Greenboro, NC, 2000), p.105

<sup>53</sup> Clifford, ‘United Nigeria’, pp.4-14, quote at p.11

<sup>54</sup> Cookey, ‘Sir Hugh Clifford’, p.546

It would be dull to reiterate in detail, but Ormsby-Gore concurred with Lugard, Cameron and the rest as to the basic principles by which Africa was to be altered,<sup>55</sup> although he had more of a technological approach to the situation, a stance more typical of his generation than of its predecessor. For Ormsby-Gore, Britain's 'tropical possessions' were an 'underdeveloped or only partially developed estate of immense value, whose potentialities can only be realised by the application of modern science'; better nutrition and health care provision for indigenous Africans were also stated aims.<sup>56</sup> Such a scheme of change was grounded in optimism. Posing to himself the question of whether there were any potential problems resulting from Western-induced changes in Africa, he stated he had 'no fears regarding the future of the Negro peoples for whom we act to-day as leaders and trustees', because the African had a 'capacity for resistance to anything that may be put upon them' that was 'truly wonderful'.<sup>57</sup> These ideas were also put forward by Ormsby-Gore in radio broadcasts.<sup>58</sup>

In this faith in the 'progress' of education in Africa, Ormsby-Gore had the support of other politicians.<sup>59</sup> Such education was seen as a means of a partial introduction into the European orbit. For the journal *Africa's* executive council, which included Lugard and the anthropologists Diedrich Westermann, the director of the Institute of African Languages and Culture, and Charles Seligman, schooling in the continent should expose people to the 'world of western learning', but this could only occur once the African's 'mind has been awakened and trained by understanding his own world'; thus the 'more intelligent' African pupils should learn more of Western ways than others.<sup>60</sup> In such cases, a Westernised education was to be pushed as far as it was felt possible without the African becoming 'detribalised' and 'destabilised'. In this light, the often-made case that education was to be provided in

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<sup>55</sup> Ormsby-Gore, 'Economic development of tropical Africa and its effect on the native population', in *The geographical journal* 68 (1926), pp.240-53; Ormsby-Gore, 'Some contrasts in Nigeria', in *The geographical journal* 69 (1927), pp.497-511; Ormsby-Gore, 'The meaning of "Indirect Rule": The principles of native administration and their application by Sir Donald Cameron, G. C. M. G.', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 34 (1935), p.284; see also 'Indirect rule in Africa', in *The Times*, 27 November 1930, p.15

<sup>56</sup> Ormsby-Gore, *The development of our empire in the tropics* (Nottingham, 1927), pp.10-5, 23

<sup>57</sup> Amery and Ormsby-Gore, 'Problems and development', p.335

<sup>58</sup> 'Indirect rule in the African colonies', in *The Times*, 29 May 1937, p.16

<sup>59</sup> Lord Olivier, 'Progress of a Negro peasantry', in *The Edinburgh review* 249 (1929), p.116

<sup>60</sup> The executive council, 'Textbooks for African schools', in *Africa* 1 (1928), pp.14-5, 21



indigenous languages was not intended as a means of insulating the African from the outside world, but instead gave the British the ability to control development along lines considered necessary. For example, in order that Africans became 'capable of assimilating the strong meat of European thought', Leo Amery believed it necessary to teach the African in his native tongue first.<sup>61</sup>

Anthony Kirk-Greene has shown how lecture tours, books, leader-writing for *The Times*, and teaching many soon-to-be colonial administrators, coupled with frequent visits to the continent and meeting many officials at first hand, made Margery Perham the 'professional for the professional'; a rare case of an interwar woman being held in high esteem by fellow contemporary commentators and a wider populace alike.<sup>62</sup> For example, Lugard enthusiastically endorsed Perham's work *Native Administration in Nigeria*.<sup>63</sup> This is unsurprising; while she argued that indirect rule was a 'transitional method' that was to be adapted over time to meet changing circumstances, her support for it as it stood in her day was unquestionable.<sup>64</sup> Her enthusiastic biography of Lugard is testament to the very high regard in which she held both him and his ideas.<sup>65</sup>

When Perham wrote of 'Some problems of indirect rule in Africa', it was on the basis that, in wishing to introduce indirect rule, officials sometimes got it wrong when attempting to ascertain the 'genuine' leader of a tribe, because they lacked detailed anthropological information.<sup>66</sup> Though the British were at such an early stage in attempting to instigate indirect rule that 'we cannot speak of proof in these matters', there was 'certainly circumstantial proof' to show that, when the correct African leaders were chosen, they

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<sup>61</sup> Amery, 'Summary of proceedings of the fifth meeting of the executive council', in *Africa* 1 (1928), p.519

<sup>62</sup> Kirk-Greene, 'Margery Perham and colonial administration: A direct influence on indirect rule', in *Oxford and the idea of commonwealth: Essays presented to Sir Edgar Williams*, F. Madden and D. K. Fieldhouse (eds.), (London, 1982), pp.127-8, 132, quote at p.132

<sup>63</sup> Lugard, 'British policy in Nigeria', in *Africa* 10 (1937), pp.377-400; see also D. Lavin, 'Margery Perham's initiation into African affairs', in *Margery Perham and British rule in Africa*, A. Smith and M. Bull (eds.), (London, 1991), p.54

<sup>64</sup> Perham, 'A re-statement', passim; R. Oliver, 'Prologue: The two Miss Perhams', in *Margery Perham*, p.22, 35

<sup>65</sup> Perham, *Lugard: The years of adventure*, passim; Perham, *Lugard: The years of authority*, passim

<sup>66</sup> Perham, 'Supplement: Some problems of indirect rule in Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 34 (1935), pp.7-11

showed themselves able to adapt to what was required of them by the British.<sup>67</sup> Perham criticised what she thought to be an uncritical application of indirect rule to the real world, rather than the validity of the system or of indirect rule itself. This was certainly how her stance was interpreted at the time. For *The Times*, Perham felt that British rule was not 'perfect', but that this was being addressed, with Britons still judged the most effective and considerate colonial power acting in Africa.<sup>68</sup> While the coming of the British had 'complicated' the life of the African, Perham argued, this was a necessity.<sup>69</sup> It was imperative that Africans were 'elevated' in order that they became capable of taking their place in the modern world.<sup>70</sup>

Regarding the modern world and the matter of timescale, in Perham's thinking there once again prevailed a juxtaposition of the belief in the rapid improvement of Africans thusfar, (for example, that the Nazirs – British-recognised paramounts – of the Northern Sudan were capable of quickly adopting Westernized modes of governance, while their people were already showing 'independence in their bearing'),<sup>71</sup> and that the future self-governance of Nigeria, for example, was very distant, the British having 'indefinite time ahead'.<sup>72</sup> To use the words of a certain election campaign of 2005, there was a lot that had been done, but a lot still left to do.

Julian Huxley was similarly viewed as an authority who had the ability to put forward his ideas effectively in the public domain. Concerning education of the African, Huxley did deviate from the majority, but only partially. He argued it was perfectly possible that, after three to five generations, it might be shown that the British had failed in their aim of educating the African.<sup>73</sup> However, even this deviation from the paradigm was heavily checked. It was believed the British 'need not think of crossing bridges before we come to them – especially if we do not know whether they exist. And in any case, two things are

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.11

<sup>68</sup> 'White and black', in *The Times*, 12 February 1936, p.15

<sup>69</sup> Perham, 'Introduction', in *Ten Africans*, Perham (ed.), (London, 1936), p.10

<sup>70</sup> Smith and Bull, 'Introduction', in *Margery Perham*, p.5

<sup>71</sup> Perham, 'The Sudan: North and South contrasts', in *The Times*, 6 June 1939, p.15

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Kirk-Greene, 'Margery Perham', p.126

<sup>73</sup> Huxley, 'Racial chess', p.550



certain. One is that, as we have embarked on the experiment of educating the native, it is our business to push on intensively and get an unequivocal answer first.<sup>74</sup> The second was that while it could 'become a fetish, a cast-iron thing, like everything else', if regional differences were allowed for, 'undoubtedly in most cases indirect rule seems to be the best method' for effecting change, for it would use Western ideas and yet still develop a 'civilisation which shall be essentially African and not merely a copy or parasitic appendage of some other civilisation.'<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the African's 'qualities of virility, of cheerfulness, [and] of adaptability... make it difficult to be gloomy about his future'.<sup>76</sup>

There is no Rousseauian lamenting about an African loss of innocence here; instead, for example, missions are deemed to have often been 'havens in which the victims of primitive barbarity could take refuge, where the savage could escape from cruel, unmeaning custom into a serener air, a fuller life'.<sup>77</sup> Compounding this, for Huxley, there was no room for an ethical code that was grounded in moral relativism to be guiding the British. There

is such a thing as a scale of values, and the realization of values is the only ultimate aim which we can perceive for man on earth. Is it not inescapably good to be able to realize these values of ordered activity, cultivated mind, civilized enjoyment... where before was only black barbarism?<sup>78</sup>

The end paragraph to Huxley's large work *Africa view* summarises the belief that underpins such sentiments, that Central Africa was the

one continental bulk where the step from barbarism to civilization has not yet been taken; the one major region of the world still free to achieve a new

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.550

<sup>75</sup> Huxley, 'Travel and politics in East Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 30 (1931), pp.260-1

<sup>76</sup> Huxley, *Africa view*, p.145, see also p.163

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.320

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.213

civilization without destroying the old. And I see England as the country which has the greatest opportunity of helping Africa towards such a future.<sup>79</sup>

As mentioned briefly above, some see in the interwar period a move from a relativistic conservatism, embodied by Lugard, to a reformist developmental mindset, embodied by Lord Hailey's *An African Survey* of 1938, which helped create a legislative atmosphere amenable to the Colonial Welfare and Development Act of 1940.<sup>80</sup> This is the logical corollary of the conclusion made by Guggisberg biographer R. E. Wraith, who suggested that as time went on, indirect rule in the colonies began to 'disintegrate because of its internal contradictions', and thus the British sought for something new to fill the void, although Wraith does not elaborate on the nature of these contradictions.<sup>81</sup> But the difference between the ideas of the two men, between Lugard and Hailey, can be exaggerated. Not only, as argued above, was the former more enthusiastic about change than some have assumed, but the latter was doubtful about pushing too far beyond the indirect rule paradigm put forward by Lugard and his supporters.

Hailey did write that 'it is clear that the scheme of indirect rule has not only its unsolved problems, but some noticeable points of weakness', mainly because a 'traditional' African authority was a less efficient agent in development than a nominated and trained chief.<sup>82</sup> However this, much like the rest of the work, is full of caveats. It 'would be rash at this stage', he wrote, 'to attempt to pronounce a final judgement on the relative value of these different systems' of governance, because native authorities had not yet gained much experience of governance, making it difficult to tell how suitable they would be as local representatives of

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.448

<sup>80</sup> A. D. Roberts, 'The imperial mind', in *The Cambridge history of Africa - Volume 7: From 1905 to 1940*, Roberts (ed.), (Cambridge, 1986), pp.63, 66, 76; A. O. Nwauwa, *Imperialism, academe and nationalism: Britain and university education for Africans 1860-1960* (London, 1997), pp.35-100; M. Havinden and D. Meredith, *Colonialism and development: Britain and its tropical colonies, 1850-1960* (London, 1993), p.167; D. A. Low, *Lion rampant: Essays in the study of British imperialism* (London, 1973), p.70

<sup>81</sup> Wraith, *Guggisberg*, p.190

<sup>82</sup> W. Hailey, *An African survey: A study of problems arising in Africa south of the Sahara* (London, 1938), pp.537-8

the Crown.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, while he was more enthusiastic about a 'Europeanisation' of education than earlier writers, stating that schooling 'cannot follow the traditional form of tribal instruction',<sup>84</sup> he felt that the European system had to be adapted to the African environment,<sup>85</sup> while 'the character of the political or cultural institutions to be adopted must be related to the capacity of each unit for development rather than to any preconceived theory of the value of institutions of European civilization'.<sup>86</sup> Once again he called for more study to be done on the matter. The whole work is, in fact, tentative and vague, stressing instead the need for a flexible approach to governance in Africa and nothing like a critique of Lugard.

This explains how some of the writers who had espoused Lugardian ideas could endorse Hailey's work. One provider of advice to the author of *An African survey* in the work's formative stages, the Scottish historian William Macmillan, had predicted in 1935 that Hailey was 'able enough', but that he was so cautious of offending conservatives that his report would 'say nothing'.<sup>87</sup> This was compounded by what the mainstream would have viewed as a streak of the positive in Hailey's work. The 'tangible signs' of an 'African consciousness which might anywhere challenge the integrity of European authority', Hailey wrote, were 'at least not spectacular; and the obstacles to their growth are great.'<sup>88</sup> True to Macmillan's prediction, many did not recognise anything subversive in Hailey's work. Instead, they felt that the principle innovations of *An African survey* lay in the fact that it was a work of many collaborators, and in its consideration of all of the European powers operating in Africa, (indeed, one of the study's explicit aims was to facilitate cooperation between such powers in the future).<sup>89</sup>

Nevertheless, as a more general tone of pessimism set in during the late thirties, a more critical examination of colonial policy began to take place. This tone was taken by elite

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.542

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.1207

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp.1280, 1290

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.247

<sup>87</sup> Bush, *Imperialism, race and resistance*, p.263

<sup>88</sup> Hailey, 'Nationalism in Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36 (1937), p.146

<sup>89</sup> 'Africa surveyed', in *The Times*, 8 November 1938, p.15

officials both inside and out of the Colonial Office, as the report of the De La Warr Commission on higher education in East Africa in 1937 reveals.<sup>90</sup> Writers such as Macmillan started to be listened to by the more liberally- and socialistically-minded. Macmillan was the figure who led this move; a first draft of Macmillan's *Africa emergent* had been passed on to Hailey at the end of 1934, but was not published until 1938.<sup>91</sup> It argued that educated, non-chiefly Africans were the future governors of Africa. It was a fallacy, he believed, to assume that to solve problems all one had to do was to educate the sons of chiefs, because this did not prevent issues arising where these sons had an impaired ability to become educated.<sup>92</sup> Much in the same way, Joyce Cary argued in his fiction – most notably *Mister Johnson* (1939) – that defects of the African educated class arose from their having too little, rather than too much, education.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, an examination of the press of the late 'thirties reveals that Amery, Lugard and their followers still held greater sway than Macmillan. Thus, the move towards a depression among the British about their ability to act on their imperial wishes was predominantly derived from a sense of anxiety about the world outside of the empire, rather than from an awareness of problems that Britain had instigated or failed to quell inside its colonies.<sup>94</sup>

For all that has been said of the opinions of colonial officials and others, it is necessary to understand the views propounded by a wider spectrum of commentators. The extent to which others such as geographers, missionaries and anthropologists supported or rejected

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<sup>90</sup> Commission on Higher Education in East Africa, *Higher education in East Africa: Report of the commission appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies* (London, 1937)

<sup>91</sup> Preliminary findings had been published in *Journal of the Royal African Society* in 1934 with little impact; W. M. Macmillan, 'The importance of the educated African', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* (1934), pp.137-42; M. Macmillan, 'Macmillan, indirect rule, and *Africa emergent*', in *Africa and Empire: W. M. Macmillan, historian and social critic*, H. Macmillan and S. Marks (eds.), (Aldershot, 1989), p.252

<sup>92</sup> W. Macmillan, 'The importance', p.140

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p.140. In *Mister Johnson*, the focus is a young, partially-educated African man, Johnson, whose downfall at the end of the novel is a direct result of his incomplete adoption of Western notions of administration and justice. Furthermore, Cary depicted traditional African village social and political life in a negative manner; J. Cary, *Cock Jarvis* (London, 1974), p.86; Cary, *Mister Johnson* (1939; London, 1995), pp.7-10, 23-5, 39-41, 197-213, 217-28; C. Cook, *Joyce Cary: Liberal principles* (London, 1981), p.65; M. M. Mahood, *Joyce Cary's Africa* (London, 1964), pp.69-70

<sup>94</sup> 'Growing strength', in *The Times*, 27 June 1939, p.15; 'Japanese threats', in *The Times*, 28 June 1939, p.15

British colonial activities is of crucial importance if any attempt at understanding the widest possible social milieu of the time is to be sustained. For example, in present-day British public dialogue, it is those who focus most upon mankind's relationship with the earth – namely, environmentalists such as George Monbiot – who provide the strongest criticisms of Western actions.<sup>95</sup> It is therefore worth examining whether or not their interwar relatives, the geographers and conservationists, were the same. They were not.

An examination of the interwar run of the *Geographical Journal*, the publication of the Royal Geographical Society, provides a rare comprehensive insight into the area where land management and politics intersected in the metropolitan arena. Following the presentation of a paper at a meeting of the society on the wildlife of Africa by the naturalist and doctor Major Richard Hingston, Sir Albert Kitson, a geological surveyor with experience in East Africa, commented that Hingston was 'correct in saying that the destruction of so much big game is not due to the good type of sportsman, but to the methods of native hunters', who undertake 'indiscriminate shooting'.<sup>96</sup> C. W. Hobley, a retired Kenyan colonial official, ethnologist and secretary of the Society for the Protection of the Fauna of the Empire, concurred. The 'British race', he argued, 'is above all others, the most sympathetic with regard to wild animals and animal life. When the question of preventing cruelty to animals arises no people are so indignant as those of British stock'. He also believed that national parks were the practical way of ensuring a colony's progress could continue uninterrupted.<sup>97</sup> These parks were, for Hobley, merely one of the ways by which the British were checking the tendency of Africans who, for superstitious reasons, 'delight in destroying trees'.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> For example, G. Monbiot, *Heat: How to Stop the Planet Burning* (London, 2006)

<sup>96</sup> 'Proposed British national parks for Africa: Discussion', in *Geographical Journal* 77 (1931), pp.423-4

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p.425

<sup>98</sup> C. W. Hobley, 'Review of *Men of the trees: In the mahogany forests of Kenya and Nigeria* by Richard St. Barbe Baker', in *Geographical Journal* 80 (1932), p.450; see also C. Conte, 'Nature reorganised: Ecological history in the Plateau Forests of the West Usambara Mountains 1850-1935', in *Custodians of the land: Ecology and culture in the history of Tanzania*, G. Maddox, J. L. Gablin and I. N. Kimambo (eds.), (London, 1996), p.111

Another in agreement with Hingston was Sir William Goodenough, the society's president.<sup>99</sup> That Goodenough's obituary writer could simultaneously present the recently-deceased as a man 'always ready to defend the cause of peoples exposed to contact with more advanced civilization, and to advocate the development of the unoccupied areas of the world'<sup>100</sup> is indicative of a wider trend; experts in the field did not then view development and preservation as uneasy companions, and neither did the popular press.<sup>101</sup> For instance, a British-managed removal of trees was very different to any undertaken by an African. A report produced by W. D. MacGregor, Senior Assistant conservator of forests in Nigeria, argued that afforestation was the solution to gully erosion in the Onitoha and Owerri Provinces and that trees should be managed 'for the particular benefit of the surrounding population', but reads like a business plan. It deals with how to extract maximum revenue from the forests, with a management plan to be based upon the volume of present stock ('capital available'), rate of growth ('income available') and regeneration plans (increase in 'efficiency'). As long as regeneration kept up with deforestation, all was well in securing economic benefit for the African and the European without harming the environment.<sup>102</sup>

The issue of desertification grew in prominence in British geographical circles in the 'thirties, having been a predominantly French colonial concern in the decade before this. Increased British attention to the matter was largely thanks to the studies of E. P. Stebbing, Professor of Forestry at Edinburgh University, though others such as Elspeth Huxley added their concerns later.<sup>103</sup> Stebbing believed that indigenous methods of cultivation were leading

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<sup>99</sup> 'Proposed British national parks', p.428

<sup>100</sup> G. R. Clerk, 'Obituary: Admiral Sir William Edmund Goodenough', in *Geographical Journal* 105 (1945), p.79

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, 'Soil erosion: A problem in human geography: Discussion', in *Geographical Journal* 82 (1933), p.146; 'Wild life in Africa', in *The Times*, 18 October 1933, p.15; 'African wild life', in *The Times*, 16 April 1935, p.17

<sup>102</sup> W. D. MacGregor, 'Report on working plan methods with proposals for the establishment and organisation of a working plans circle in the colonial forest service, Nigeria', 25 October 1935, CO 583/205/9-10, 16; see also Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.527

<sup>103</sup> J. Swift, 'Desertification: Narratives, winners & losers', in *The lie of the land: Challenging received wisdom on the African environment*, M. Leach and R. Mearns (eds.), (Oxford, 1996), p.74; E. Huxley, 'The menace of soil erosion', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36 (1937), pp.357-70. E. William Bovill was an early exception to Swift's general rule; E. W. Bovill, 'The encroachment of the Sahara on the Sudan', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 20 (1921), pp.174-85, 259-69



to desertification, with the Sahara encroaching into the West African colonies of both Britain and France.<sup>104</sup> Unchecked, this would provide a damaging impediment to Africa's 'development' under the British. But even he believed that this threat could be 'largely met' by embarking on a dual program of 'conserving and improving' existing 'degraded' forest and of re-educating Africans in the way they handled their land. Indeed, Stebbing's article in the *Geographical Journal* ends on an optimistic note, despite the reality of a threat being clearly outlined.<sup>105</sup> Even then, the Anglo-French Forestry Commission that investigated the issue in winter 1936-7 concluded that desertification was occurring at a far slower rate than Stebbing had argued, and that the limits of this erosion could be controlled within defined areas with relative ease.<sup>106</sup> Thus, in the interwar years no perceived challenge to the idea that Britain should continue to develop Africa arose from the ranks of geographers. Some geographers even advocated development at a rate above what they perceived to already be the case.<sup>107</sup>

While British interwar geographers were rarely seen as 'meddlers', colonial officials' relationships with Christian missions were far more mixed, at both rank-and-file and elite levels.<sup>108</sup> However, the world of missionary work as mediated and presented via the metropolitan network of newspapers, books and journals still requires analysis, even if there is a good likelihood that some official disregarded what missionaries said. This is especially the case given that some retrospective accounts of church work in Africa are at pains to stress

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<sup>104</sup> This idea was not new; Hobley, 'Soil erosion: A problem in human geography', in *Geographical Journal* 82 (1933), pp.139-46; 'Soil erosion: A problem in human geography: Discussion' in *ibid.*, pp.146-50

<sup>105</sup> E. P. Stebbing, 'The encroaching Sahara: The threat to the West African colonies', in *Geographical Journal* 85 (1935), pp.506-19, quotes at p.519

<sup>106</sup> B. Jones, 'Desiccation and the West African colonies', in *Geographical Journal* 91 (1938), pp.401-23, especially pp.401, 414, 422-3

<sup>107</sup> E. M. J., 'Review of *Historical outline and analysis of the work of the Survey Department of Kenya Colony, 1 April 1903 to 30 September 1929* by J. H. Williams', in *Geographical Journal* 79 (1932), p.514

<sup>108</sup> For a groundbreaking study on this relationship, see A. Porter, *Religion versus empire?: British protestant missions and overseas expansion* (Manchester, 2004). Regarding rank and file officials see, for example, Bell to parents, 10 October 1936, SAD 698/1/30; A. Jones to Colonial Secretary, 9 March 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.454/1-8. With regards to governmental elites, while Lugard approved of missions as providers of education, Sir William Gowers, governor of Uganda, believed that they should not be given control of education in Africa above a 'very rudimentary stage'; Lugard, *The rise*, Volume One, pp.190-1; W. F. Gowers to Lord Lloyd, 8 May 1929, CO 536/158/2/5-7. Nevertheless, certain Africans still saw the secular and non-secular facets of their interaction with Europeans as inseparable; Isichei, *The Ibo people*, p.102

how missionaries were keen to push on with 'civilizing' the African as much as possible, ahead of what the government deemed acceptable or realistic.<sup>109</sup> If missionaries voiced different sets of aims for the continent in the public arena to other commentators, this may have reduced the strength of the impact of such peers' ideas upon the wider public.

It is not denied that missionaries viewed development as a means to a greater end, which 'must always remain... to win Africa for Christ'.<sup>110</sup> However, though they made it clear that their priority was God over government, missionary writers were very keen to avoid distancing themselves from Whitehall.<sup>111</sup> In the face of a perceived threat to the future of Christianity in Africa due to the 'Mohammedan menace', there was a powerful impetus for why missionaries wished to close ranks with European non-missionaries,<sup>112</sup> and promote their own agenda by gently pushing the government towards a greater provision of education with a religious foundation.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the extent to which missionaries differed from non-missionaries in public discussions as to Britain's African policy was not as great as might be assumed from the retrospective accounts of missionary activity mentioned above.

The Reverend Edwin W. Smith, a prominent Primitive Methodist evangelist, argued that indirect rule was the best way to govern Africans but that, however much the British wanted to 'conserve tribal life... some amount of disintegration is inevitable', the only remedy to

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<sup>109</sup> The framing of missionaries as mould-breakers in this area is undoubtedly due in part to the fact that such works are sometimes by pro-missionary writers defending the role of missions from postcolonial attack; see the hagiographic S. Neill, *Colonialism and Christian missions* (London, 1966), pp.309, 332; see also G. Hewitt, *The problems of success: A history of the Church Missionary Society 1910-1942* (London, 1971), Volume One, passim

<sup>110</sup> E. F. Stanton, 'Missions and governments in African education', in *The church overseas* (formerly *The East and the West*) 1 (1928), p.108; see also J. H. Oldham and B. D. Gibson, *The remaking of man in Africa* (London, 1931), p.137

<sup>111</sup> Stanton, 'Missions and governments', p.108; G. H. Williams, 'Relations with government in education: British colonies in tropical Africa', in *The international review of missions* 14 (1925), pp.9, 16, 19, 23

<sup>112</sup> Quote from E. C. West, 'The call from Africa', in *The East and the West* 24 (1926), p.159; see also F. H. Hawkins, 'Africa in transformation', in *The East and the West* 23 (1925), p.230

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, W. E. Owen, 'Forced labour in East Africa', in *The church overseas* 4 (1931), p.224; G. Kellerman, 'The cinema in Asia and Africa', in *The East and West review* 2 (1936), pp.298, 305. Bodies such as the International Missionary Council also actively sought the opinions of respected commentators like Lugard as to the quality of their own publications; J. M. Davis to Lugard, 28 March 1933, RCMS 113/89

which was to replace old pagan belief with the 'new and more vital' Christian faith.<sup>114</sup>

Missions, Smith argued, should cooperate with governments

in maintaining as intact as possible, and for as long as may be possible, the African tribal system. Whatever defects we may find in it, that system provides the framework best adapted to the natives' needs in their present stage of development.<sup>115</sup>

This system of indirect rule would facilitate development; it was merely that at the same time as supporting this system, 'we [those involved in the church in Africa] should do all we can to put a new soul into it.'<sup>116</sup> For Smith, the example of the 'liberality' of the Emir of Kano validated the British government's programme in Africa, an opinion shared by his non-missionary peers.<sup>117</sup> He believed that there was much to be optimistic about; things had started well, for '[o]rdered European government in Africa is a boon to be thankful for... we are liable to forget that the old Africa was the scene of abominable cruelties.'<sup>118</sup> Suffice to say, the missionary heralded Lugard's *The dual mandate* as a 'masterpiece'.<sup>119</sup>

Others felt the same way, including Joseph H. Oldham, secretary of the International Missionary Council from 1921 until 1938 and a man held to be of pre-eminent importance, and Alexander Fraser, the educationist, missionary and first principal of the government secondary school at Achimota in the Gold Coast.<sup>120</sup> They drew on contemporary examples as

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<sup>114</sup> E. W. Smith, 'The disintegration of African society', in *The East and the West* 22 (1924), pp.147-59, quotes at pp.157, 159

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159; see also Smith, 'The story of the institute: A survey of seven years', in *Africa* 7 (1934), p.27

<sup>117</sup> Smith, 'Indirect rule in Nigeria: Miss Perham's Great Book', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36 (1937), p.372-7, quote at p.373; C. R. Niven, 'Kano in 1933', in *Geographical Journal* 82 (1933), pp.336-43

<sup>118</sup> Smith, *The Christian mission in Africa* (London, 1926), p.14

<sup>119</sup> Smith, 'Indirect rule in Nigeria', p.371

<sup>120</sup> 'The new missionary: Forces of literature', in *The Times*, 28 June 1924, p.15; Oldham, 'The educational work of missionary societies', in *Africa* 7 (1934), p.48; Oldham and Gibson, *The remaking*, pp.50, 58, 80, 86; Oldham, 'Recent tendencies in African native education', in *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 75 (1927), pp.663-7; A. G. Fraser, 'Aims of education', in *International review of missions* 14 (1925), pp.515, 517; Fraser, 'Native education in Africa', in

proof of the consistency of their schemes, that Christianity could be combined effectively with traditional African cultural values. For both missionaries and *The Times*, the Asantehene, Agyeman Prempeh I, who was deposed and exiled by the British in the late nineteenth century, returning to the Gold Coast as a Christian and a private citizen in 1924 before being made a chief again in 1926, was one such example.<sup>121</sup>

It could be argued that Smith, Oldham and Fraser's endorsement of government policy was inevitable. After all, the most prominent men of the church missionary movements were establishment figures. It is unsurprising that in 1925 Oldham endorsed the statement prepared by the Colonial Office's Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, presided over by Ormsby-Gore and prepared in collaboration with Lugard and various governors among others, because Oldham was one of these others.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, such men knew each other well. For example, Oldham and Fraser had been great friends at Oxford and, from 1898 onwards, brothers-in-law. Therefore, the charge could be made that these few men represented a closed elite who did not necessarily propound views shared by the majority of missionaries. But it was not merely the most publicly-visible missionaries who advocated such ideas. For example, G. F. Earl, a member of the Church Missionary Society's Gordon Memorial Sudan Mission, agreed with these men with respect to the Sudan.<sup>123</sup> W. C. Willoughby, who produced an enormous volume on the 'soul of the Bantu' for the Student Christian Movement in 1928, argued that missionaries needed to study African society and customs because they 'must meet the African where he is if they wish to lead him up to

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*Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 81 (1933), pp.815, 819; Fraser to C. S. Deakin, 11 December 1924, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1563(2)/2; Fraser, *Report on Achimota College for the year 1928-1929* (Accra, 1929), p.18; Hewitt, *Problems of success*, Volume One, p.107; H. H. Montgomery, 'Education in tropical Africa', in *The East and the West* 23 (1925), p.6

<sup>121</sup> 'The prince on the West coast', in *The Times*, 21 April 1925, p.15; 'King Prempeh: Bishop Taylor Smith and the C. M. S.', in *The Times*, 4 May 1925, p.20; 'Ex-King Prempeh: Restoration to chieftainship', in *The Times*, 19 October 1926, p.14; E. Akyeampong, 'Christianity, modernity and the weight of tradition in the life of "Asantehene" Agyeman Prempeh I, c.1888-1931', in *Africa* 69 (1999), pp.279-311

<sup>122</sup> Oldham, 'Educational policy of the British government in Africa', in *International review of missions* 14 (1925), pp.421-7

<sup>123</sup> G. F. Earl, 'Some educational ideals and progress in the Southern Sudan', in *The East and West review* 5 (1939), pp.36, 41-2

where he ought to be'.<sup>124</sup> The optimism behind such assertions, that this synthesis was possible, ties in with ideas about black peoples in America. For example, the 'Negro spiritual' was perfect proof of a smooth combination of African aesthetic and Christian content.<sup>125</sup>

So, in general, from 1918 onwards missionaries learned to show a greater respect for African customs and adapted their own practices in Africa in an attempt to endear themselves to Africans.<sup>126</sup> Missionaries expressed concerns that the continent would be 'lost to materialism' were imperialism not grounded in faith.<sup>127</sup> And yet this did not mean they disapproved of trade, notions of justice, administrative responsibility and the like, but that they merely perceived, more so than others, that there was a balancing act to ensure that Africa was developed 'for the best'.<sup>128</sup> They remained pro-imperialist.<sup>129</sup> White Christian writers sanctioned the Phelps-Stokes conclusions;<sup>130</sup> that the commission's calls for indirect rule and a gradualist approach to development in Africa were right was, for missionaries, confirmed by the 'authentic' affirmations of indigenous African pastors.<sup>131</sup>

Anthropological study was often championed by missionaries, no more so than by Edwin Smith who, among other works, produced *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia* with Captain A. M. Dale in 1920 before going on to become President of the Royal Anthropological

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<sup>124</sup> W. C. Willoughby, *The soul of the Bantu* (New York, 1928), p.xix; see also Willoughby, 'Some conceptions concerning the Bantu conception of the soul', in *Africa* 1 (1928), pp.338-47; T. C. Young, 'How far can African ceremonial be incorporated in the Christian system?', in *Africa* 8 (1935), pp.210-7

<sup>125</sup> A. M. Chirgwin, 'The vogue of the Negro spiritual', in *The Edinburgh review* 247 (1928), pp.57-74

<sup>126</sup> J. Iliffe, *Africans: The history of a continent* (Cambridge, 1995), p.227

<sup>127</sup> W. J. W. Roome, *Through Central Africa for the Bible* (London, 1929), pp.9, 34-8, 77-8, 103, 195-6

<sup>128</sup> W. L. Mills, 'Work in Eastern Kordofan', in *The East and West review* (formerly *The church overseas*) 4 (1938), p.70; S. Baudert, 'Thoughts and reflections on the education of Africans', in *The international review of missions* 20 (1931), p.526; Oldham and Gibson, *The remaking*, p.51; W. J. W. Roome, *Through Central Africa for the bible* (London, 1929), pp.34-5, 77-8, 103, 195-6. The idea that the two were in conflict with one another may be found among many Christians of the period, but perhaps found its most extreme advocate in the, admittedly marginal, anti-modernist Distributist League, founded in 1926 by G. K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc; T. Buchanan, 'Great Britain', in T. Buchanan and M. Conway (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1918-1965* (Oxford, 1996), pp.259-60

<sup>129</sup> J. J. Willis, 'Reflections on Christian work in Africa based on experiences in Uganda', RCMS 165/3; Smith, *Christian mission*, pp.36-7

<sup>130</sup> West, 'The call from Africa', p.164

<sup>131</sup> For example, V. N. Umunna, 'Nigerian paganism as a preparation for the Gospel', in *The East and West review* 5 (1939), p.139

Institute between 1933 and 1935.<sup>132</sup> A desire for a modified version of the 'pre-colonial' played itself out in the anthropological arena. One example of this can be seen in the wish for the establishment of set regional lingua francas. Even anthropologists wanted to simplify African language as a means of making the task of governance easier. Looking at the Gold Coast, Westermann advocated the merging of the two Akan dialects, Twi and Fante, and the standardization of Akan, Ga and Ewe.<sup>133</sup> This scheme and others like it found approval in those sections of the media interested in such matters. For *The Times*, reasons of practicality dictated that the amount of languages that were to survive 'must be restricted to the smallest possible number'. This was not a cause for nostalgia, for African languages were 'living languages in the fullest sense of the word. They extend and recede like living organisms; they can adapt themselves to the needs of the moment.'<sup>134</sup>

Even those who wrote substantial works on 'ancient' African social features displayed no sadness at the passing of an older way of existence. Westermann praised the ideas of Lugard, a fellow member of the executive council of the International Institute of African Languages and Culture, in unequivocal terms, deeming him a 'genius'.<sup>135</sup> Regarding the timescale of change in Africa, Westermann claimed that 'the capabilities of the Negro have developed in a way that would have seemed impossible to many half a century ago',<sup>136</sup> and that the African was 'making such progress' in education that he would soon be taking commercial posts held by others.<sup>137</sup> Nonetheless, it was the 'basics' that had been adopted rapidly, with the more complex tasks, such as trading, probably remaining beyond his capabilities 'for a long time to come.'<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> For an instance of Smith's endorsement of the works of other anthropologists, see Smith, 'Presidential address – Africa: What do we know of it?', in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 65 (1935), p.74, see also p.15

<sup>133</sup> Westermann, 'A visit to the Gold Coast', in *Africa* 1 (1928), pp.107-11; see also 'Common script for Gold Coast languages: Report by Professor D. Westermann', [1927], CO 96/675/11; S. Newell, *Literary culture in colonial Ghana: How to play the game of life* (Manchester, 2002), p.64

<sup>134</sup> 'Babel in Africa: The barriers of language, A way through', in *The Times*, 18 December 1928, p.15

<sup>135</sup> Westermann, *The African*, p.7, see also p.165

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30, see also p.44

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p.307

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.307, 331

The aims of the International Institute of African Languages and Culture with regards to Westermann's ideas found support in the press, because the 'study of racial individuality and mental culture of African peoples' helped to determine those aspects of the West that the African should adopt, and which 'valuable elements in their own past... must be conserved if they are to possess an individuality of their own'.<sup>139</sup> Therefore, papers championed anthropology because it was felt that the discipline provided administrators with insights into the mind of the African. Furthermore, the press and other interwar sources of commentary, such as fiction, felt that anthropologists wanted the same sorts of programmes of partial reform as the colonial administrators.<sup>140</sup> If this were not the case, it is difficult to see how Edgar Wallace could have publicly endorsed their work.<sup>141</sup>

An anthropological championing of change was not the sole preserve of Westermann. For instance, at the start of his study on those living in the north of the Gold Coast, A. W. Cardinall rejoiced that Africans will 'in no long time... neglect and forget these hampering fetters of old-age custom which in the following pages I have endeavoured to record'.<sup>142</sup> Despite describing the Kassena language in exhaustive detail, Cardinall showed no signs to his readers of any despondency at the inevitable passing of the language; rather, he considered it an archival curio, something to be preserved on the page for the day it no longer existed.<sup>143</sup>

There were those anthropologists who spoke about the difficulties of an African adjustment to the modern world, such as Richard Thurnwald.<sup>144</sup> And yet they did so in a tone redolent of Elspeth Huxley's novel, 1939's *Red strangers*.<sup>145</sup> According to them, Africans would ultimately be reconciled with Western ways, despite a lengthy period of adaptation. As one commentator wrote in the *Journal of the Royal African Society*, that 'education creates its

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<sup>139</sup> 'African culture: New international institute', in *The Times*, 5 November 1926, p.9

<sup>140</sup> For example, 'Primitive folk: Anthropology for administrators', in *The Times*, 3 June 1932, p.21

<sup>141</sup> Wallace, *Again Sanders* (1928; London, 1961), pp.84-5

<sup>142</sup> A. W. Cardinall, *The natives of the Northern territories of the Gold Coast: Their customs, religion and folklore* (London, 1920), p.xi

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115

<sup>144</sup> Thurnwald, 'The social problems of Africa', in *Africa* 2 (1929), pp.130-4; Thurnwald, 'Social systems of Africa', in *Africa* 2 (1929), pp.238-42

<sup>145</sup> E. Huxley, *Red Strangers* (1939; London, 1999), pp.198-204, 405-6

difficulties is not denied... [however] education cannot be withheld, and... the resulting advantages entirely outweigh all contrary considerations on condition that the stabilising factor of an equitable and co-ordinated system of African land tenure is simultaneously introduced.<sup>146</sup> As a result of such changes, the 'loyalty and contentment' of the African would be increased, and thus reform was for the better.<sup>147</sup> Another writer in the same journal proudly showed off the increase in the number of African scholars studying in British colonies, and remarked that there was 'no reason' why the African 'peasants' of the future 'should not read Shelley and Shakespeare and all the literature of revolt and freedom, along with their women-folk and the rest of us of an evening'; it was simply a matter of time, for '[b]read, however, comes before cake'.<sup>148</sup>

So, men like Lugard and other governmental elites felt that Britain was strong enough to change Africa, and that Africans were robust enough to adapt to such changes. Here, we have seen how other strands of thought bolstered rather than undermined these beliefs. Geographers did not oppose the alteration of the African environment, because they felt Europeans handled this environment 'better' than Africans. The missionaries endorsed change for their own ends, constantly tying their conclusions closely to those of the elites whom they wished to influence into being more explicitly pro-Christian. And, lastly, the anthropologists had no major issues with change. They were not as wedded to preserving the past at all costs as one might initially assume.

It is now necessary to focus upon the interwar press. Here, as has been noted already, discussions of Africa were far less frequent when compared to those about the Dominions, India, and, in particular, more generalised articles concerning empire-related issues such as free trade. Nonetheless, more was made of the continent than Bernard Porter has argued. Most of the focus on Africa, however, took the form of generalised discussions about the role

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<sup>146</sup> J. E. T. Philipps, 'The tide of colour: II. – Pan-Africa, anti-white or not? The economic remedy', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 21 (1922), p.312

<sup>147</sup> Philipps, 'The tide of colour: II', p.309

<sup>148</sup> R. Smith, 'Education in British Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 31 (1932), pp.61, 75, quote at p.75



of officials and indirect rule in colonial Africa, and about specific controversial or 'big' issues, such as reform in Liberia, and the role of settlers in Kenya.

Articles that dwelt on the nature of the colonial official are predictable enough in content. In a *News Chronicle* article of 1931, the sporting Oxbridge alumni who worked in the Sudan – known as the 'Old Blues' – were praised for what they were doing there; the paper argued that the Sudanese were rapidly learning to 'manage their own affairs, to do justice among themselves, to improve their primitive culture ... and they are becoming extremely zealous about getting themselves and their children educated'.<sup>149</sup> Though such proclamations were primarily made in order to emphasize the 'benevolence' of those who had the ability to rapidly transform the Sudan in only thirty years, the article nevertheless still contained the idea that such 'benevolence' facilitated progress among even the most humble of villagers.<sup>150</sup> An article in the *Dumfries and Galloway Standard* in 1921 noted the sense of pride at witnessing change, for if 'pioneer work is hard, it has its compensations. There is the fascination of watching developments and seeing results come quickly'.<sup>151</sup> One writer in *The Cornhill Magazine* noted that, while Africans generally had a distrust of whites, there were two exceptions to this – missionaries and British officials, who were 'trusted everywhere' and were the best officials of any nation.<sup>152</sup>

It might have been inevitable that *The Times* wholeheartedly endorsed Lugard's ideas by dint of his long association with the newspaper, an association that had originally been compounded by his wife, Dame Flora, who served as the newspaper's colonial editor until 1900.<sup>153</sup> But it was felt that they had good cause to do so because the successes of indirect rule in Malaya had already proven what the British could achieve in terms of facilitating both change and stasis. According to one editorial, to have 'moulded' the Malaysians 'to the aims

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<sup>149</sup> "'Old Blues' oust the slaves', in *News Chronicle*, 16 February 1931, p.8

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.; see also 'From bondage to freedom', in *The Times*, 2 February 1928, p.13

<sup>151</sup> 'Mr John Maxwell, C.M.G.', in *Dumfries and Galloway Standard*, 12 October 1921, reprint in RHO Mss.Afr.s.2133(3)

<sup>152</sup> H. Condenhove, 'On certain facets of the Central African natives', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 55 (1931), pp.216-7, 220

<sup>153</sup> 'Lessons from West Africa', in *The Times*, 30 October 1928, p.17; see also 'Mandates', in *The Times*, 31 May 1930, p.13; 'Colonial facts and fallacies', in *The Times*, 13 January 1936, p.13; 'Lady Lugard', in *The Times*, 5 February 1929, p.15

and purposes of the West without obscuring their racial characteristics is not one of the least achievements of British administration.<sup>154</sup>

At any rate, Lugard's ideas exerted a pull on writers outside of John Jacob Astor's little empire.<sup>155</sup> Among others, Reginald Coupland felt they were a means of facilitating stable evolution and 'progress'.<sup>156</sup> By staying in the 'background', the British colonial official could ensure change took place, without it appearing that the African was being forced into anything; indirect rule was best because 'progress induced by force is less permanent than progress induced by persuasion'.<sup>157</sup> Indirect rule would curb the influence of the 'detrified' African and, once the influence of the local authorities had been established, in keeping with the perceived ability of the African to develop rapidly under British supervision, there 'should be little trouble' in the future.<sup>158</sup> Even if, as has been argued above, H. G. Wells did not carry the majority of his readers along with him towards a utopia,<sup>159</sup> it is interesting to note that he was happy to advocate Lugard's ideas as the best means of gradually improving Africans.<sup>160</sup> The righteousness of the British way was validated by a widespread dislike of French methods, which were held to involve an uncritical assimilation, a creation of 'black Frenchmen'.<sup>161</sup> A belief in racially-defined change was underpinned by

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<sup>154</sup> 'The prince in Malaya', in *The Times*, 1 April 1922, p.13

<sup>155</sup> For example, J. A. Marriott, 'Projects of world-peace', in *The quarterly review* 529 (1936), p.168

<sup>156</sup> R. Coupland, *The empire in these days: An interpretation* (London, 1935), pp.169-70, 176; see also Coupland, 'The Hailey survey', in *Africa* 12 (1939), pp.1-11; W. Fitzgerald, 'The impact of Western civilization on Negro Africa', in *Geographical review* 26 (1936), p.78; C. Lucas, *The partition & colonization of Africa* (Oxford, 1922), pp.76, 117, see also pp.132, 139-40, 172-3, 198-206

<sup>157</sup> 'Great Britain and France in Northern Africa', in *The Round Table* 76 (1929), p.736

<sup>158</sup> C. W. Hobley, 'Some native problems in Eastern Africa: Part I', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 22 (1923), pp.191, 197-8

<sup>159</sup> Wells, *In the fourth year: Anticipations of a world peace* (London, 1918), p.40; W. T. Ross, H. G. Wells's *world reborn: The outline of history and its companions* (Cranbury, New Jersey, 2002), p.77; Partington, *Building cosmopolis*, pp.109-10

<sup>160</sup> Ross, H. G. Wells's *world reborn*, p.87

<sup>161</sup> 'Mr F. Gray's journey from N Nigeria to Sudan', CO 583/142/8/25. This dislike of French methods did not obscure the fact the British thought the French were doing better in Africa than Africans could do unaided; 'France in Northern Africa', in *The Times*, 12 March 1929, p.17. However, the degree to which this assimilation was actually as total as then thought by the British has subsequently been questioned by academics; G. P. Kelly, 'The presentation of indigenous society in the schools of French West Africa and Indochina, 1918 to 1938', in *Comparative studies in society and history* 26 (1984), pp.523-42; B. Singer, 'Lyautey:

economic sentiments. There was a good deal of optimism regarding the future economic strength of Nigeria in the immediate postwar period, for example,<sup>162</sup> which was matched by perceptions of other individual areas of Africa and of the continent as a whole,<sup>163</sup> which inevitably supported the idea that the British were doing very well in increasing the rates of production and trade.<sup>164</sup>

The emphasis on gradualism as a means of ensuring a country could stand on its own before gaining increased independence was, for the interwar metropole, seemingly borne out by the examples of Egypt and Liberia. In 1929, failed Liberian presidential candidate Thomas Faulkner successfully convinced Washington that Charles King's Monrovia administration condoned slavery, corruption and other 'primitive' customs, and a protest note was sent to Liberia by the US State Department. The Liberian government acquiesced to the American request for an international enquiry to look into the charges made by Faulkner, and the League of Nations appointed Dr. Cuthbert Christy, an explorer, medical officer and natural historian of some renown, to head a commission for this purpose.<sup>165</sup> He reported back to British audiences that the African-Americans of Monrovia thought only of themselves, neglecting the indigenous population to the extent that there

seems no possibility of the original dream of the Liberians materializing, of their ever "devising a new and more appropriate civilization for negro West Africa" out of their own immigrant people; nor without assistance does there seem any probability of their ever gaining the administrative confidence of the

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An interpretation of the man and French imperialism', in *Journal of contemporary history* 26 (1991), p.135.

<sup>162</sup> W. A. Crabtree, 'Great Britain in West Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 19 (1920), p.202; G. A. Oldfield, 'The native railway worker in Nigeria', in *Africa* 9 (1936), p.401

<sup>163</sup> R. K. Winter, 'The Sudan to-day', in *The Times*, 13/3/28, p.xxiii; "'Old Blues" oust the slaves', in *News Chronicle*, 13 February 1931, p.8

<sup>164</sup> I. L. Evans, *The British in tropical Africa: An historical outline* (London, 1929), *passim*

<sup>165</sup> J. G. Liebenow, *Liberia: the quest for democracy* (Bloomington, 1987), pp.57-8. Christy was known by many, including Lugard, and had met many, such as Lord Delamere, in Tanganyika in the twenties; for example, see C. Christy, diaries, 10 April 1898, RCMS 124/5; Christy, diaries, 2 October 1925, RCMS 124/29

tribes without which no progressive development can take place... Liberia to-day sorely needs disinterested foreign assistance.<sup>166</sup>

The findings of Christy's commission were discussed in strongly-worded editorials.<sup>167</sup> The disgust at a perceived lack of administrative ability in the republic that the Christy report generated did not die out quickly; in *The Spectator* in 1936, Peter Fleming, the then-well-known journalist and brother of Bond creator Ian, branded Liberia 'much less than half-baked republic... it has been a flop'.<sup>168</sup> Academics said it a little more politely, but they said it all the same.<sup>169</sup> Christy and the conclusions of his commission merely popularised that which had gone before; in 1922 Lucas had argued that Liberia proved that the 'rightful job' of the British was 'to be trustees of the black man until in some distant future (if ever) the black men have become able to stand by themselves'.<sup>170</sup>

The same was said by some of the state of post-1922 Egypt, which drove the admittedly gloomy Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Austen Chamberlain to despair on numerous occasions.<sup>171</sup> A minority in the press even went as far as to suggest that an independent Egypt should be re-annexed because it had fallen into such a chaotic state under Zaghlul.<sup>172</sup> In tandem with what has already been discussed with regards to Abyssinia, independent

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<sup>166</sup> Christy, 'Liberia in 1930', in *Geographical journal* 77 (1931), p.539; see also 'Dr Christy: Naturalist and explorer', in *The Times*, 7 June 1932, p.16

<sup>167</sup> 'Slavery in Liberia', in *The Times*, 12 January 1931, p.13; 'A bankrupt oligarchy', in *The Times*, 30 May 1933, p.17; 'Another council to-day', in *The Times*, 14 May 1934, p.15

<sup>168</sup> P. Fleming, 'Long live Liberia', in *The Spectator*, 15 May 1936, in 1936 as recorded by *The Spectator*, C. Moore and C. Hawtree (eds.), (London, 1986), p.230; see also Lugard, *Dual mandate*, pp.84-5

<sup>169</sup> A. B. Keith, *The governments of the British Empire* (1935; London, 1936), pp.208-9

<sup>170</sup> Lucas, *Partition & colonization*, pp.123, 134, 207

<sup>171</sup> 'Egypt: The background of negotiation', in *The Round Table* 102 (1936), pp.267, 269; A. C. McBarnet, 'Egypt and judicial reform', in *The quarterly review* 509 (1931), pp.46-62; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 25 April 1926; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 28 May 1926; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 19 June 1926, in *The Austen Chamberlain diary letters: The correspondence of Sir Austen Chamberlain with his sisters Hilda and Ida, 1916-1937*, R. C. Self (ed.), (Cambridge, 1995), pp.289, 291; see also M. Badrawi, *Political violence in Egypt 1910-1924* (Richmond, 2000)

<sup>172</sup> J. E. Marshall, 'The solution of the Egyptian problem', in *The quarterly review* 494 (1927), pp.254, 256; see also Marshall, 'The capitulations in Egypt', in *The quarterly review* 497 (1928), pp.114-28; Marshall, 'Lord Lloyd and Egypt', in *The quarterly review* 502 (1929), pp.388-408. The Foreign Office nevertheless deemed this inadvisable; Foreign Office correspondence with Downing Street in RCMS 112/132-146

African states were felt to have failed. This was an opinion that was both reinforced by, and continued to reinforce, paternalistic conceptions of development in a circular manner.

This relative lack of divergence in views of Africa was delimited geographically. Alongside Liberia and Egypt, the present chapter has focused principally upon commentaries that dealt with Nigeria, the Gold Coast, Tanganyika, and the Sudan, which were in stark contrast to those tackling the thorny issue of Kenya. Commentators strongly disputed the degree of power Kenyan white settlers were to wield, a debate often covered in extensive detail, not merely in arch-imperialist journals such as *The Round Table*, but in the mainstream press and fiction of the time as well.<sup>173</sup> Could one, they asked, concomitantly uphold the wishes of the settlers and the 'best interests of the native'? This engendered a sense of crisis that was heightened by the settlers' own adversarial stance. Settlers preached a particularly fervent set of racist ideas. For example, Arnold Paice, a settler based in the Nanyuki district of Kenya was scathing of the idea of the 'civilizing mission' and had no compunction about shooting 'niggers down like rabbits'.<sup>174</sup>

Such sentiments were underpinned by social tension between Indians, whites and Africans, and between white missionaries and white settlers.<sup>175</sup> It was only exacerbated by economic weaknesses; the failure of crops such as flax helped engender an air of pessimism that was far greater than anything experienced by officials elsewhere in Africa.<sup>176</sup> Dane Kennedy's pioneering study has shown how deeply-felt fears of the African climate amongst Kenyan settlers was an expression of a 'real and serious socio-psychological dislocation' which gave 'impetus to a uniquely defensive form of socialization', a defensive form that helped to create

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<sup>173</sup> 'Kenya', in *The Round Table* 51 (1923), pp.507-29; 'Kenya: The settler's case', in *The Round Table* 101 (1935), pp.82-97; 'East Africa', in *The Times*, 11 August 1921, p.11; Louis, *In the name of God go!*, pp.95-6; C. J. D. Duder, 'Love and the lions: The image of white settlement in Kenya in popular fiction, 1919-1939', in *African Affairs* 90 (1991), pp.427-38

<sup>174</sup> Duder and C. P. Youé, 'Paice's place: Race and politics in Nanyuki district, Kenya, in the 1920s', in *African affairs* 93 (1994), pp.270-2

<sup>175</sup> A. R. H. Mann diaries, 3 September 1935, RCMS 116/35, 38. According to the admittedly biased William McGregor Ross, C. F. Andrews, a missionary whom Ross deemed an 'apostle of racial friendship, had suffered 'physical assault at the hands of some Kenya settlers'; W. M. Ross, 'East Africa now', *The church overseas* 2 (1929), p.207

<sup>176</sup> A. Paice to mother, 25 April 1920, RCMS 178/5; Paice to mother, 25 January 1921, RCMS 178/5; Paice to mother, 17 February 1921, RCMS 178/5; see also P. van Zwanenberg, 'Kenya's primitive colonial capitalism: The economic weakness of Kenya's settlers up to 1940', in *Canadian journal of African studies* 9 (1975), pp.277-92

an 'adversarial stance' towards Africa as an environment.<sup>177</sup> This 'settler' mentality generated hostility among others who engaged with Africa, and not merely men such as left-winger and ex-colonial official William McGregor Ross.<sup>178</sup> The majority of elite officials who worked elsewhere in Africa also opposed the 'settler' attitude.<sup>179</sup>

The debates over Kenya calmed down, at least to the extent that the British press felt increasingly disinterested in covering them when, in the late 'twenties, white settlers ceased, at least for the time being, to press for minority self-rule, having failed to use their political potential to follow the path set by South Rhodesia and South Africa. They lacked, among other things, a dominant rallying personality, while their reputation was harmed by persistent metropolitan doubts as to the viability of the settler economy.<sup>180</sup> However, while the issue of Kenya raised controversy in its own right, it was felt to have little implication for the rest of Africa, and the way in which a relationship between black and white was to be constructed elsewhere. It was not envisaged that the situation in the highlands would ever spread to other parts of the continent, with the exception of northern Tanganyika, (of which more later), as it was very widely accepted that the majority of Britons were not racially

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<sup>177</sup> D. Kennedy, 'Climatic theories and culture in colonial Kenya and Rhodesia', in *Journal of imperial and commonwealth history* 10 (1981), pp.50-66, quotes at pp.50, 62; see also Cannadine, *The decline and fall*, pp.440, 443; Zwanenberg, 'Kenya's primitive colonial capitalism', p.292; though see B. L. Shadle, "'Changing traditions to meet current altering conditions": Customary law, African courts and the rejection of codification in Kenya, 1930-60', in *Journal of African history* 40 (1999), pp.411-3; 'An experiment in African education in Kenya', in *The Round Table* 79 (1930), pp.570, 572

<sup>178</sup> Ross, *Kenya from within: A short political history* (1927; London, 1968), pp.453-5; Ross, 'East Africa now', in *The church overseas* 2 (1929), p.214; N. Leys, *Kenya* (1924; London, 1973); see also D. Wylie, 'Norman Leys and McGregor Ross: A case study in the conscience of African empire 1900-39', in *Journal of imperial and commonwealth history* 5 (1977), pp.294-309; Wylie, 'Confrontations over Kenya: The Colonial Office and its critics 1918-1940', in *Journal of African history* 18 (1977), pp.427-47

<sup>179</sup> Lugard, 'The constitution of Kenya', CO 822/1/8/9; see also Lugard to E. Lugard, 15 October 1930, RHO Mss.Lugard.5(4)/5-6; Lugard to E. Lugard, 13 November 1930, RHO Mss.Lugard.5(4)/7-8; R. A. Frost, 'Sir Philip Mitchell, governor of Kenya', in *African affairs* 78 (1979), p.536; Cameron to Passfield, 16 August 1929, CO 691/106/1/11-4; W. de la Mothe to Cameron, 20 July 1929, CO 691/106/1/16-27; 'Transcript of meeting between Cameron and members of the Moshi branch of the European Association of Tanganyika', 22 July 1929, CO 691/106/1/28-64

<sup>180</sup> M. S. Clough, *Fighting two sides: Kenyan chiefs and politicians, 1918-1940* (Niwot, CO, 1990), pp.33-5

suited to the permanent colonisation of other parts of Africa.<sup>181</sup> These areas, it was declared in a geographically-induced spirit of generosity, were the home of the African. After all, the British may have loved sub-Saharan tropical Africa, but the majority never felt that they had become a part of the continent. There was no great body of people who defined themselves as 'Anglo-African'. 'Broadly speaking', wrote L. S. Suggate in *Africa*, a work aimed at university students, 'Europeans in tropical Africa must be only temporary inhabitants, whose work will be mainly of an official, supervisory, or commercial character'.<sup>182</sup> The problems raised by Kenya were not taken to be of significance for Britain's other colonies.

Now that the main specific metropolitan sources of discussion concerning the continent have been examined, it is necessary to turn to a more generalised matter. Some postcolonialist writers have argued that, alongside a more 'rational' faith in the validity of British ways of governance, Britons concurrently saw Africa as a romantic, mysterious country, which thus explains the existence of a tension implicit in the very act of colonizing.<sup>183</sup> As has been shown above, this belief overstates the case, given that the British at this time actually believed that they could remake Africa without the continent losing its essence, that a realignment of 'traditional' societal systems along Western lines was in fact desirable and viewed as a mode of development that was more or less internally coherent. But one can go further, for the dichotomy established by Bhabha and others, between a romantic 'stasis' and an anti-romantic 'change', is in itself false. This is because the very act of altering the continent was viewed as romantic and a cause for excitement.

Such a belief was present across the differing types of people who engaged with African matters in the interwar period. Following the first regular London to South Africa airmail, which left Croydon Airport for the Cape on 20 January 1932, one commentator asked '[i]s the day of romance ended? I say it has hardly begun... The development and education of Africa's native races... [and] the harnessing of capital and of science [to the ends of

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<sup>181</sup> Christy, 'White settlement in tropical Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 27 (1928), p.340; 'The African labour problem', in *The Round Table* 71 (1928), p.501; see also Perham to the editor, 'Future of the two Rhodesias: Divergent systems of government', in *The Times*, 29 July 1939, p.8

<sup>182</sup> L. S. Suggate, *Africa* (London, 1929), p.58

<sup>183</sup> See above, Introduction, p.11

developing the continent's resources]: this is the romance before us.'<sup>184</sup> Newspaper editorials concurred throughout the period with regards to innovations in aeronautical technology.<sup>185</sup> Such sentiments closely echoed those of the wider metropole towards technology in general as outlined in chapter one. Far from having an oppositional stance to innovation, the British embraced it, and were in fact excited by its potential when it was felt that such innovations were 'moderate' and 'useful'. Knowledge felt to have originated in the West was to be harnessed for all; it is unsurprising, therefore, that a belief in science as part of colonial development became 'something close to a religious dogma' among some imperialists during the inter-war period.<sup>186</sup> This enthusiasm manifested itself in more general terms. For *The Times*, the 'excellent' new roads in Uganda were indicative of the fact that over all of Africa 'development has been so rapid that the marvellous has become commonplace'; the new roads were 'rightly' to be judged on their economic merits, but 'should also be taken as a demonstration that the old pioneering spirit cheerfully persists.'<sup>187</sup>

This was frequently borne out of a love of what Africa was, and what it could be were it given the 'correct' guidance. Though perhaps unusually direct for a politician, Ormsby-Gore nevertheless seems to have been genuine when he said of Africa, 'I love the continent, and the fascination of these new countries, the fascination of seeing them at the very beginning of

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<sup>184</sup> F. Melland, 'The natural resources of Africa', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 31 (1932), p.114; see also R. McCormack, 'Airlines and empires: Great Britain and the "Scramble for Africa", 1919-1939', in *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10 (1976), p.88, 104-5. This enthusiasm for developing air routes across Africa was shared by Colonial Office officials and governors such as Bourdillon; 'Aviation development: Gold Coast', [1937], CO 323/1441/2. Such innovations were deemed to be of high priority, given that it was felt by certain elites that transport was the problem of interwar Africa that required tackling most urgently; 'The future of transport in tropical Africa', in *Journal of the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 6 (1927), p.183

<sup>185</sup> For example, 'A valuable air cruise', in *The Times*, 26 November 1928, p.15; 'Africa air mails', in *The Times*, 24 April 1937, p.13

<sup>186</sup> J. M. Hodge, 'Science, development, and Empire: The Colonial Advisory Council on Agriculture and Animal Health, 1929-43', in *Journal of imperial and commonwealth history* 30 (2002), p.1; see also Ormsby-Gore, *The development*, p.23. Hodge believes this dogma was something that was shared by all; however, as chapter five will discuss, colonial officials attached differing levels of significance to scientific innovation.

<sup>187</sup> 'New roads in Uganda', in *The Times*, 20 June 1929, p.17; such a commitment to engineering works had a healthy precedent; see, for example, 'Harnessing the Nile', in *The Graphic*, 13 December 1902, p.796; 'Harnessing the Nile', in *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 December 1902, p.4



their new history, is almost overwhelming.<sup>188</sup> Once again, newspaper editorials concurred, expressing wholehearted and barely-disguised excitement at the 'new Africa' Britain was thought to be constructing.<sup>189</sup> Similarly, for J. H. Oldham and B. D. Gibson, Oldham's assistant at the International Missionary Council, the

remaking of African life cannot for those who have imagination be anything but an adventure and a romance. Nor is the romantic element diminished when the Spiritual feature of Africa is considered in the light of Christian ideas, since it is one of the undoubted contributions to human progress that the person of its Founder and the life to which he called men revealed altogether new and unsuspected depths in human personality.<sup>190</sup>

Edwin Smith, concurred with his missionary friends.<sup>191</sup> Despite its mainly concerning itself with economics and trade, the title of Arnold Wright's popular history work, *The romance of colonisation*, says it all. For Wright, recent years were 'full of evidence of the virility and enterprise of the British race demonstrating the persistence of a genius not merely for distant rule but for the association with that rule of productive schemes of material development'. This development, and the act of making something anew was presented as worthy of excitement.<sup>192</sup>

That Africa was much changed, and that there was still much to change, were both romanticising factors. The missionary John Roscoe argued that Africa was 'no longer the almost unknown land, but a land attracting with its irresistible charms... a veritable land of

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<sup>188</sup> Amery and Ormsby-Gore, 'Problems and development', p.333

<sup>189</sup> See, for example, 'The new West Africa', in *The Times*, 30 October 1928, p.xii

<sup>190</sup> Oldham and Gibson, *The remaking*, p.10

<sup>191</sup> Smith, 'Presidential address', p.81

<sup>192</sup> A. Wright, *The romance of colonisation: Being the story of the economic development of the British Empire* (London, 1923), passim, especially pp.vii, 1, 92, 274, 367-8, quote at p.vii; see also R. Muir, *A short history of the British commonwealth: Volume II - The modern commonwealth (1763 to 1919)* (London, 1922), pp.652, 659-60, 789

promise, a land of adventure'.<sup>193</sup> This was a continuation of what Lugard had felt in the late-Victorian period.<sup>194</sup>

The other specific issue can now be dealt with; what were the ramifications of such change for British ideas about how Africa would end up? Some did not feel themselves able to predict what was to happen in the future, and so they were perfectly content to deal with the present without this future troubling them. Because 'the era of complete independence is not yet visible on the horizon of time',<sup>195</sup> Lugard felt that, for instance, whether or not the African was 'capable, like Japan and other races of the East, of some day rivalling Europe and America in manufactures requiring the highest skill... is for the distant future to determine, and we may safely leave posterity to deal with the problem, if and when it arises.'<sup>196</sup> Harold MacMichael, civil secretary in the Sudan from 1926 until he became governor of Tanganyika in 1934, drew similar conclusions,<sup>197</sup> as did *The Times*, which said of East Africa, '[t]hese are still early days... and though the lines of the future are not quite clear as yet the pages that follow make it abundantly plain that a great enterprise is afoot'.<sup>198</sup> Asked whether Britons had any idea as to what Africa would look like in 50 or 100 years time, Julian Huxley answered 'I am not at all sure that we have. Some of us have not got any ideas at all on the matter; and the ideas of those who have them are so diverse that they cancel out.'<sup>199</sup>

It is common for modern-day intellectuals to articulate the belief that the emergence of nations implicitly precipitated an undermining of imperial stability.<sup>200</sup> However, for those who were prepared to tentatively suggest what would happen in the future, the conclusions arrived at did not precipitate a sense of unease with the notion of moving Africans towards self-government. The interwar metropole did not feel that the emergence of nations would

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<sup>193</sup> Roscoe, *Twenty-five years*, p.276

<sup>194</sup> Lugard, *The rise*, Volume One, p.243

<sup>195</sup> Lugard, *Dual mandate*, p.198

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p.509

<sup>197</sup> MacMichael, *Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, pp.12, 272-7

<sup>198</sup> 'Empire building in Africa', in *The Times*, 13 March 1928, p.12

<sup>199</sup> Huxley, 'Racial chess', p.537

<sup>200</sup> R. G. Suny and M. D. Kennedy, 'Toward a theory of national intellectual practice', in *Intellectuals and the articulation of the nation*, Suny and Kennedy (eds.), (Ann Arbor, MI, 2001), p.394

cause the collapse of the British Empire.<sup>201</sup> For some, such as Leo Amery, African nations would one day be self-governing in local interests with Britain running their external relationships with the rest of the world, especially with regards to trade, bound into a Commonwealth in a similar manner to an envisaged self-governing India.<sup>202</sup> After all, Amery was only really interested in the empire as a single economic unit. Therefore, as long as Africa was tied to Britain via trade links, the empire, though changed, would still be alive in its most important respect.<sup>203</sup> For Charles Temple, lieutenant-governor of the northern provinces of Nigeria under Lugard, the aim of indirect rule was the development of a 'healthy self-respecting national spirit among all classes of a native unit' which would 'result in the permanent establishment of such a nexus as exists between members of a federation rather than that which holds between conqueror and conquered.'<sup>204</sup> As Coupland said of the idea of 'A Dominion of Nigeria', 'Why not?... If that day ever dawns, it ought surely to be another proud day for us.'<sup>205</sup>

Such ideas, or ideas like them, cut across political lines. Liberal imperialist and Cliveden set member Lionel Curtis was the first to explore in any detail the idea of a multiracial Commonwealth containing self-governing African nations,<sup>206</sup> the Fabians having argued in a similar, if vague, vein at the turn of the century.<sup>207</sup> The bedrock of such sentiments was provided by, among other bodies, the Empire Marketing Board, who put forward an image of

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<sup>201</sup> Indeed, Cooper has gone as far as to suggest anti-colonial movements 'were not a stage along an inevitable pathway from empire to nation, but part of a wider pattern of struggle whose culmination in the multiplication of nation-states was conjunctural and contingent'; Cooper, *Colonialism in question*, pp.153-4

<sup>202</sup> Amery and Ormsby-Gore, 'Problems and development', p.332

<sup>203</sup> D. Faber, *Speaking for England: Leo, Julian and John Amery – The tragedy of a political family* (London, 2005), pp.237-8

<sup>204</sup> C. L. Temple, 'The government of native races', in *The quarterly review* 457 (1918), p.304

<sup>205</sup> Coupland, *The empire in these days*, pp.179-80; see also Keith, *The British commonwealth of nations: Its territories and constitutions* (London, 1940), pp.27-8

<sup>206</sup> D. Lavin, 'Lionel Curtis and the idea of commonwealth', in *Oxford and the idea of commonwealth: Essays presented to Sir Edgar Williams*, F. Madden and D. K. Fieldhouse (eds.), (London, 1982), p.97; see also N. Rose, *The Cliveden set: Portrait of an exclusive fraternity* (London, 2000), p.92; V. Halpérin, *Lord Milner and the empire: The evolution of British imperialism* (1950; London, 1952), p.180

<sup>207</sup> Fabian Society, *Fabianism and the empire*, pp.15, 21

the empire as a 'benign family with each member playing a complimentary role.'<sup>208</sup> The white dominions of the interwar period were felt to provide pertinent proof of body politics that were happy to exist as self-governing nations within an imperial framework.<sup>209</sup> Where a metropolitan awareness of white dominions' attempts to develop their own roles in the world existed, these were not felt to undermine a sense of Commonwealth solidarity.<sup>210</sup>

Those who wielded influence at an elite level in shaping public debate by and large formed a mutually self-reinforcing group. Despite differences of emphasis, the use of chiefs with a certain amount of devolved power as supervisors on behalf of the British was what indirect rule meant to the overwhelming majority of metropolitan commentators, virtually none of whom opposed it as the best way of administering Africa. Firstly, with regards to the influential administrators and ex-administrators, the same sense of metropolitan confidence as was outlined in chapter one seeped into their approach to Africa. But such confidence was also borne of their own situations. For example, these men were writing from a vantage point that was informed by an access to confidential reports that spoke of stability, a stability partly engendered by a confidence in the ability of the British to hold their own in Africa militarily.<sup>211</sup> The arguments of elite officials and of those other Britons most interested in discussing the continent on a public level were more often than not alike in their conception of the manner Africa was to 'develop', despite their often having very different briefs.

Such change was also felt necessary. Alongside the traditional and often undoubtedly genuine adherence to paternalistic 'civilizing mission' plans, there were imperative pragmatic

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<sup>208</sup> A. Ramamurthy, *Imperial persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British advertising* (Manchester, 2003), p.170

<sup>209</sup> For example, E. Grey, 'The dominions and foreign policy', in *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs* 3 (1924), pp.308-10; 'Mr. Bennett in England', in *The Times*, 6 February 1939, p.13

<sup>210</sup> To compound this, the Ottawa trade agreements were felt to have done more to 'strengthen imperial cohesion' than the 'centrifugal effect of the Statute of Westminster could have done to weaken it'; even then, the Statute was viewed 'not as a retreat from empire, but as a British-led partnership' by the majority; T. O. Lloyd, *The British Empire 1558-1995* (1984; Oxford, 1996), pp.294-5; see also 'The Observer Silver Jubilee Supplement', in *The Observer*, 5 May 1935; Williamson, *National crisis*, p.3

<sup>211</sup> Informed as they were by reports such as 'The Accra defence scheme 1932', CAB 11/174, passim, especially pp.1, 4

reasons for changes to be made. Governance of Africans, it was felt, would be made easier if the British strove to take

the feelings, the interests, and the opinions of the black and the yellow... most carefully into consideration. It will be impossible to continue to govern this Empire by mere force, and it is far better that we should strive to shape its government in such a way that it may be voluntarily supported and defended by the governed, and not merely tolerated or unwillingly endured.<sup>212</sup>

Such was the opinion of explorer and colonial administrator Harry Johnston in 1901 and, if he was ahead of the majority in his belief that the British should somehow respect the views of non-whites, these ideas were part of the norm after 1918. This remains the case irrespective of the extent to which an interwar white understanding of African views may now appear to us to have been blinkered.

The tier of commentators immediately below these in terms of prominence supported such ideas. Missionaries agreed with the principles of indirect rule as these were understood by their secular peers. Those engaged with geographical and conservational issues thought of the introduction of Western ways to Africa not as a cause for concern, but as an essential prerequisite for the saving of the continent from the ramifications of the 'problematic' facets of indigenous societal systems. Anthropologists did not mourn the passing of these facets. While all of these types of commentators did not neglect to consider that there were difficulties in forwarding their ideas for the continent, they were genuinely confident in their ability to change Africa where such change was considered necessary. It was only towards the end of the 'thirties that mainstream commentators questioned the appropriateness of indirect rule, and even then such people remained in the minority.<sup>213</sup>

Indeed, despite retrospective claims that the British favoured stasis, contemporaries who had issues with imperial policy suggest otherwise. In the wake of indirect rule, colonial

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<sup>212</sup> H. H. Johnston to F. Whyte, 17 September 1901, FW 37

<sup>213</sup> A. Mostyn, 'A woman on the Gold Coast', in *The Cornhill Magazine* 156 (1937), pp.405-12

methods were, for noted expert Lucy Mair, still 'actuated by an unquestioning belief in the inherent superiority of British justice' and the like; imperialists needed to 'envisage native development, not as a process which must eventually culminate in the adoption of European institutions, but as a series of adjustments to the new circumstances which native societies are being called upon to face'.<sup>214</sup> Nevertheless, even Mair felt that such adjustments were necessary in order that Africa should be able to deal with the rigours of the modern world, while improvements were to be made to African society via the use of 'native' authorities.<sup>215</sup>

Whether the majority was genuine or not in its pro-change declarations is not of primary concern here – though it has been for some<sup>216</sup> – as the key process of the present chapter has been a delineation of the discussions on Africa that were available to those members of the middle-class public most interested in the continent. Britain could save Africa from itself, the line went. The simultaneous introduction to Africa of institutions that were at least partially grounded in Western values and practice, and the encouragement of certain facets of the pre-colonial 'status quo', were not felt to be mutually irreconcilable by the overwhelming majority of those who dwelt on the issue at this time. Whatever the rapid rate at which it was believed development would be taking place, the British genuinely felt themselves able to militate against the emergence of major difficulties, mediating the African experience of the imperial system to ensure effective change. 'Mediating' is the key word here, for an insistence upon controlling the means by which the African encountered change existed across all facets of the colonial experience.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> L. P. Mair, *Native policies in Africa* (London, 1936), pp.6-7

<sup>215</sup> Ibid, pp.274-9; Mair, 'Chieftainship in modern Africa', in *Africa* 9 (1936), p.315

<sup>216</sup> For example, M. Semakula Kiwanuka has argued that the British colonial system 'came to be associated with the philosophy [of indirect rule] not so much because the British applied more indirect rule but because they talked more about it than others'; M. S. Kiwanuka, 'Colonial policies and administrations in Africa: the myths of contrasts', in *African historical studies* 3 (1970), p.300

<sup>217</sup> See, for example, Willis, 'Demoralised natives, black-coated consumers, and clean spirit: European liquor in East Africa, 1890-1955', in *Journal of imperial and commonwealth history* 29 (2001), pp.56, 64

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## The Africa of the colonial official (1): Exporting racism and the British way

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The private diaries, letters home, and official reports of British colonial officials in interwar Africa reveal that they maintained a sustained intellectual engagement with metropolitan ideas about Africa, as is shown by the newspaper clippings that they have left behind.<sup>1</sup> This is understandable. While some went out to Africa because they had a vague interest in it, a desire to engage with research about Africa had been encouraged by their training. While it was perhaps only the most dedicated of officials who attended educative events while on leave, such as the 155 who took part in the Oxford University summer school on colonial administration of July 1937,<sup>2</sup> all underwent training prior to their first African posting. From 1908 onwards all entrants to the Colonial Administrative Service bound for East or West Africa were offered a two or three month course at the Imperial Institute in London. In 1926 the year-long Tropical African Administrative Services course was introduced, which was offered at Oxford, Cambridge and Trinity College, Dublin.<sup>3</sup>

This was set against a backdrop of colonial officials' sustained interest in British and international events. Officials had old copies of *The Times* or its weekly digest equivalent sent

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<sup>1</sup> Sarsfield-Hall, 'Newspaper cuttings', SAD 675/5/1-46; A. R. C. Bolton, 'Newspaper cuttings, 1926-1955', SAD 722/4/1-69; E. C. F. Flavell, 'Newspaper cuttings', SAD 795/1/1-28

<sup>2</sup> 'The Oxford University summer school on colonial administration: 3rd - 17<sup>th</sup> July 1937', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 37 (1938), p.97

<sup>3</sup> Kirk-Greene, *On crown service: A history of HM colonial and overseas civil services 1837-1997* (London, 1999), pp.23, 27

out to them, as well as other works such as *Punch* and *The Spectator*.<sup>4</sup> General Election results were mulled over, gossip and the doings of politicians were recorded, while the move towards conflict in Europe and elsewhere was noted gloomily as the 'thirties progressed.<sup>5</sup> Homesickness only heightened the degree to which officials awaited any domestic news with anticipation. Writing to his parents from Mwanza in Tanganyika, Francis Dowsett was not alone in commenting that 'everyone here talks more about England than anything else'.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, fiction bestsellers such as Galsworthy's *The Forsyte saga*, Priestley's *The good companions* and Robert Graves' *Goodbye to all that* were recurrent favourites among members of the S.P.S.<sup>7</sup> Reading was a key leisure activity,<sup>8</sup> and a means of reaffirming a link with a Western civilization and a Britain (re)imagined.<sup>9</sup>

Because so many have left details of the large wealth of publications that they read on the verandah after a day in the office or by the campfire on trek, it is possible to trace the way in which certain ideas had an impact upon officials. The present chapter will examine colonial officials' interactions with, and the degree to which they accepted, metropolitan perceptions of race, the 'civilizing mission' and Africa. While, for the interwar official, race remained the predominant determinant of one's personality, the intellectual links between metropole and colony also generated the belief among officials that a combination of racial and cultural factors shaped the individual, which brought about a sense that, with persistence, anyone

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<sup>4</sup> Dowsett, letter to mother, 30 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/6; D. A. Percival, diaries, 6 September 1930, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.364(2)/27; J. V. Shaw, diaries, RHO Mss.Afr.s.357/passim; Bell to parents, 16 November 1936, SAD 698/1/48

<sup>5</sup> Dowsett, letter to mother, 5 November 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/23; W. H. Beeton, diaries, 4 October 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1608(9); Beeton, diaries, 19 November 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1608(9)

<sup>6</sup> Dowsett, letter to parents, 19 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/4

<sup>7</sup> For example, see J. A. A. Blaikie, memoirs [1986], SAD 815/17/21; B. D. McDonnell Dee, diaries, 31 January 1930, SAD 890/3/23; McDonnell Dee, diaries, 5 February 1930, SAD 890/3/31; Bell to parents, SAD 698/1/4 among many others.

<sup>8</sup> H. Childs, diaries, 9 July 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I; interview with Bowcock, 9 September 2006. This penchant for reading was not confined to British colonial officials, as the diaries of John Dickson, a gold prospector in Tanganyika, reveal; J. Dickson, diaries for 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.738

<sup>9</sup> For instance, at least one colonial official in the Sudan thought *My brother Jonathan* by Francis Brett Young 'excellent'. The bestselling tale is a sentimental portrayal of life in the Black Country; McDonnell Dee, diaries, 1 March 1930, SAD 890/3/56; L. J. Jay, 'The Black Country of Francis Brett Young', in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 66 (1975), pp.57-72



was malleable to some degree. Thus, the continued existence of race as a biological 'truth' did not foreclose the possibility of Africans being changed. On the contrary, it was this mixture of 'nature' and 'nurture' that justified the introduction of the same blend of Western-informed change and the 'pre-colonial' that underpinned what Lugard and others felt were internally coherent points of view.

As for the British 'mission', those interwar British colonial officials examined carried to Africa with them a sense that what they were doing was valid. Some today believe that there were facets of British life that were being introduced to Africa that officials were not happy with, and which undermined any unequivocal sense that British-informed development was 'right'.<sup>10</sup> The two most prominent of these facets were trade, industry and other aspects of interwar capitalism, and urbanization. The former was, the argument runs, borne of a feeling that trade was 'good' because it brought in revenue, but 'bad' because it changed the 'native' for the worse. Allegedly 'snobbish' upper-middle-class attitudes towards trade and 'getting one's hand dirty' with money only compounded the matter.<sup>11</sup> Thus, for Cyril Ehrlich, 'it can scarcely be denied that administrative attitudes, throughout British Africa, rarely encouraged indigenous commercial initiative',<sup>12</sup> while for T. O. Lloyd, pro-indirect rule administrators' dislike of the 'educated African' can partly be explained by officials' opposition to the trade and capitalism that such Africans encouraged.<sup>13</sup> With regards to urbanization, some scholars have argued that British officials equated the 'town with vice and the bush with virtue', which resulted in a desire to keep the Africans away from urban 'contamination'.<sup>14</sup>

Such claims are unfounded. The temptation to put officials into a single basket with regards to all aspects of the colonial experience must be avoided, and there was a definite line of rupture that existed between those who labelled themselves 'city' D.C.s and those who labelled themselves 'bush' D.C.s. Some revelled in the active social life and electrical lighting

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<sup>10</sup> John Iliffe has argued that 'indirect rule was reinforced by post-war despair with European values'; Iliffe, *A modern history of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), p.320

<sup>11</sup> C. Ehrlich, 'Building and caretaking: Economic policy in British tropical Africa, 1890-1960', in *Economic history review* 26 (1973), pp.650-1

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.652

<sup>13</sup> Lloyd, *British Empire*, p.273

<sup>14</sup> For example, Wraith, *Guggisberg*, p.137

that living in Accra or Khartoum afforded. Many officials came from backgrounds where parties and other functions were part of the societally-normative order and, when in Africa, they continued to enjoy the social company of Europeans and a modified version of this metropolitan lifestyle.<sup>15</sup> For instance, George Trinick wrote home that, after having worked with African labourers 'snag-busting' on the Niger, 'I lost no time in getting down river to civilisation and all it means in the way of mails, comfort, etc.'<sup>16</sup> For Trinick, Port Harcourt was a source of barely-concealed excitement. Pages are given up describing the architecture and contents of the places in which he socialised.<sup>17</sup> For example, the club in Port Harcourt 'is really splendidly done, and all electrically lit. There is a large ladies' room, with every paper and periodical that anyone might wish for',<sup>18</sup> while the harbour master there 'has a magnificent house, large and airy without being barnlike. The P[ublic] W[orks] D[epartment] must have visited the Ideal Homes Exhibition, for it is most pleasant and convenient'.<sup>19</sup> The man delighted in travelling in luxury and comfort.<sup>20</sup> 'I must say the P. W. D. have excelled themselves', he wrote in 1922, 'for the roads are like linoleum', he remarked in between talk of society gossip and social gatherings.<sup>21</sup> 'City' administrators had no issue with an increase in both urbanization and trade and industry in Africa provided that there were clear boundaries to such increases. By contrast, others found the urban routine oppressive, deeming the attempts of others to replicate a world of dances and dinner parties dull and indicative of the narrow-minded domesticised preoccupations that had made the carefully crafted world of Charles Pooter such a literary success.<sup>22</sup> This is significant because it is frequently argued that social interaction naturally informs all facets of one's mindset to a significant degree and thus any animosity towards a society's exterior social manifestations

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<sup>15</sup> For example, Sheffield to father, 14 March 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/14; Sheffield to mother, 13 November 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/43

<sup>16</sup> Trinick to aunt, 1 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/38

<sup>17</sup> Trinick to aunt, 1 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/34-5

<sup>18</sup> Trinick to mother, 23 August 1922, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/26

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Trinick to aunt, 1 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/38

<sup>21</sup> Trinick to mother, 23 August 1922, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/26

<sup>22</sup> G. and W. Grossmith, *The diary of a nobody* (1892; London, 1999)

may engender animosity towards its ideals.<sup>23</sup> But while 'bush' D.C.s were often condescending, or at least ambivalent, with regards to the social whirl of 'city' colonial life, this was not matched by a concurrent blanket renunciation of urban environments and urbanization. Instead, these officials enjoyed living away from urban areas because of the relative 'freedom' it gave them. Furthermore, 'bush' officials were not opposed to trade, industry and so on, because it was felt that these would make their task of governance easier and their own lives more comfortable.

Nevertheless, a British desire to change Africa does not in itself prove that officials did not mourn the passing of that which was felt to be 'traditional'. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo argues that colonial officials were full of imperial nostalgia even as they were effecting change; they yearned 'for the very forms of life they intentionally altered or destroyed.'<sup>24</sup> In contrast to this view, it will be argued here that a certain understanding of pre-colonial Africa forestalled any sense among the majority that a change of the rural was 'bad', and that there was in fact relatively little difference in opinion between 'bush' and 'town' officials on this matter. Both sets of officials' readings of the continent allowed for the past to be partially overwritten without any sense of loss. Furthermore, Africa could adapt; it was robust enough to be able to stand up to the impact of change. The best could stay, while the worst could be changed without major worry.

Firstly, we need to examine race, which was *the* predominant factor by which interwar colonial officials assessed any African. The rhetoric of racism was employed freely in letters home and diaries. Writing to his aunt from Nigeria in the mid 'twenties, George Trinick often referred to Africans as 'niggers' or 'nigs'.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, more than one official on his way out to the Sudan referred to the Africans at Port Said as 'chocolate biscuits'.<sup>26</sup> This mindset was, for some, reinforced by a continued engagement with the latest 'scientific' research on race. These officials kept up with the output of publications such as the *Journal of the African Society*.

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<sup>23</sup> R. Brown, 'Social identity theory: Past achievements, current problems and future challenges', in *European journal of social psychology* 30 (2000), pp.745-78

<sup>24</sup> R. Rosaldo, 'Imperial nostalgia', in *Representations* 26 (1989), pp.107-8

<sup>25</sup> G. W. Trinick to aunt, 1 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/33, 37

<sup>26</sup> For example, C. A. E. Lea to parents, 8 December 1926, SAD 645/7/2; see also T. R. H. Owen to mother, 15 December 1926, SAD 414/1/1

Amongst the private papers of one Tanganyikan administrator, I. C. Middleton, a 1934 paper from this journal has been preserved. The article discusses the racially-determined intellectual 'inferiority' of the East African when compared to the European, and calls for further study to be made about the biological reasons for this and how the situation could be rectified.<sup>27</sup> The same sorts of conclusions were also put forward in journals that dealt with individual countries, such as *Sudan notes and records* and *Tanganyika notes and records*. These publications were frequently read by, and indeed, often included contributions from, officials.<sup>28</sup>

This does not mean, however, that race was used solely as a negative determinant, which is in keeping with interwar metropolitan beliefs. For Trinick, African ideas were 'so entirely different from ours... [and] by no means illogical. They are quicker than many think in reasoning, + soon spot a weak point in any argument.'<sup>29</sup> Similarly, 'nigs are very good to their children + tend them far better, generally-speaking, than most white people.'<sup>30</sup> However, violence continued to be used against Africans. Trinick admitted to using a foot or a fist when he felt it necessary to make the African get on with a task in hand. This, however, was not felt 'excessive' cruelty; it was felt to be akin to the caning of a child – a 'necessary evil'. The comparison to caning is pertinent because this 'necessary evil' sprang from the same metropolitan paternalist attitude as that of the schoolmaster, as Mangan has shown.<sup>31</sup>

The belief that racial characteristics were 'positive' indicators of reality, rather than a set of guidelines to be used to support 'discrimination', is demonstrated most clearly by the typical British colonial official's dislike of the Kenyan settler. In 1936 Charles Gillman, an official and a member of the editorial board of *Tanganyika notes and records*, wrote a book review in which

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<sup>27</sup> I. C. Middleton, papers, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1079/2-6

<sup>28</sup> For one of many examples, see K. D. D. Henderson, 'Nubian origins', in *Sudan notes and records* 14 (1931), pp.90-4. These journals were also held in high esteem by metropolitan publications such as the *Journal of the Royal African Society* 'Sudan notes and records', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 21 (1921), pp.79-80; 'Sudan notes and records', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 29 (1930), pp.213-5; 'Recent articles of African interest', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 36 (1937), p.129; see also B. Hamad, 'Sudan notes and records and Sudanese nationalism, 1918-1956', in *History in Africa* 22 (1995), pp.239-70

<sup>29</sup> Trinick to aunt, 13 April 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/44

<sup>30</sup> Trinick to aunt, 13 April 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/48

<sup>31</sup> Mangan, 'Education of an elite imperial administration', passim; see also Mangan, *The games ethic and imperialism*, passim

he supported an author felt by settlers to be biased in favour of Kenyan Africans.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, Charles Whybrow, who worked as a teacher and educational inspector in Tanganyika, wrote of the settlers that they 'think that the country should be run for their benefit, and if a District Officer or any other official happens to disagree with them, they seem to stop at nothing to get rid of him. Thank goodness I didn't go to Kenya. There aren't enough settlers in Tanganyika to matter.'<sup>33</sup> Other colonial officials used their private diaries to mark settlers out as dangerous or morally wrong in their treatment of Africans.<sup>34</sup>

In this colonial officials did not necessarily subscribe to a paradigmatic metropolitan view; after all, as has already been discussed, the matter of settlers was a controversial one, particularly during the 'twenties. This divergence from at least a section of the metropole can be accounted for when we consider that some officials' antipathy was borne of the feeling that such mistreatment of the African hampered a British ability to run the empire, and not solely because this treatment was in itself morally wrong. Nevertheless, in the early 'twenties, one Gold Coast D.C. had written in a memo to others in the service, '[d]o not let it be thought that one considers oneself of a race set apart. It is perfectly possible to avoid this without losing respect.'<sup>35</sup> This wish to avoid setting oneself apart from the African did not, of course, usually extend to socialising with him.

A further instance where colonial officials displayed the same mindset as those in the metropole was the belief that social traits were accounted for by both 'racial' inheritance and cultural influence. Writing to the Chief Secretary in Dar es Salaam from Lushoto in the Usambara District, Gerard Barnes noted that a Paramount Chief was 'superstitious and nervous. His superstition is racial. The nervousness is most probably due to years of

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<sup>32</sup> C. Gillman, 'Books reviewed: Review of L. S. B. Leakey's *Kenya: Contrasts and problems*', in *Tanganyika notes and records* 2 (1936), p.111

<sup>33</sup> C. Whybrow, letter to unknown recipient, 29 August 1926, RHO Mss.Afr.s.324; see also A. E. Haarer, 'Memories covering twenty-two years of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika Territory', [n.d.], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1144/3-4, 7; Lea to parents, 23 March 1927, SAD 645/7/57. However, some travelled to Kenya but did not comment on the racial situation there in their private papers; F. Oates, diaries, [leave of July 1931, written 1932], RHO Mss.Afr.6039/37-9

<sup>34</sup> C. W. M. Cox, diaries, 27 June 1939, SAD 673/4; Popplewell, 'Random recollections', RHO Mss.Afr.s.2156/4

<sup>35</sup> L. G. Dixon, 'Life and duties of an administrative officer in the Gold Coast Colony', [c.1922], RHO Mss.Afr.s.356/5

repression and may disappear as his confidence in our Administration develops'.<sup>36</sup> In making this sort of statement, Barnes appears to have been greatly influenced by an anthropological approach to Africa. He recorded African cultural events that he witnessed at great length and in an anthropological manner, especially those of a musical nature, and attempted to understand why such cultural rituals existed.<sup>37</sup> Hubert Childs, who served as an official in Nigeria from 1928 until military service beckoned in World War Two, deemed it 'curious' how certain villages in the western part of the Ibadan division

have the tradition of cleanliness and others have not. Much must depend on the character + energy of the Chiefs but I believe also that it is expressive of the natural outlook of the people.<sup>38</sup>

Childs admitted to his diary that he was greatly influenced by what he read, and the quotation above was certainly in keeping with the beliefs present in the novels that Childs devoured; Childs was an ardent reader of the works of Anthony Trollope, in which the interplay of 'nature' and 'nurture' is a common theme.<sup>39</sup> Metropolitan racial ideas defined the way Africans were approached by colonial officials.

Similar links can be determined when it comes to officials' opinions of themselves. Looking back on his time in Nigeria from 1966 or thereabouts, James Allen suggested that postcolonial Africans had a tendency to claim that lying, stealing and corruption had been introduced by the British. Against these charges Allen argued that it was true that such crimes had become widespread in the post-1945 period; this was due in part to the British abolition of 'tribal

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<sup>36</sup> Barnes to Chief Secretary, Dar es Salaam, 27 January 1926, RHO Mss.Afr.s.462/50; see also Barnes, safari diaries, 22 November 1924, RHO Mss.Afr.s.460/11

<sup>37</sup> Barnes, safari diaries, 15 July 1919, RHO Mss.Afr.s.458

<sup>38</sup> Childs, diaries, 10 September 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I

<sup>39</sup> Childs, diaries, 9 July 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I; Childs, diaries, 15 October 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I; Childs, diaries, 1 December 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I; Childs, diaries, 2 December 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I; Childs, diaries, 17 December 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/2; see also S. Meyer, *Imperialism at home: Race and Victorian women's fiction* (Ithaca, NY, 1996), p.7

sanctions' and a gradual breakdown of 'tribal discipline'.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, the colonial officials of the interwar period, the 'strong, courageous leaders of men with a gift for organisation and "man management"',<sup>41</sup> had pursued the

policy of gradualism, which was observed up till the outbreak of the last war... [and] strove to retain all that was good in the indigenous administration... Thus it was hoped in time to create a successful blend of western ethical concepts with the traditional discipline and code of conduct... But for this time, patience and wisdom were required and the post-war world was not prepared to tolerate such enforced delays.<sup>42</sup>

All would have gone well, Allen was saying, if only the Second World War had not ruined everything.

Such claims might look solely like a retrospective attempt to justify empire or a previous approach to empire, or part of a wish for a return to the 'good old days'. This charge is frequently levelled against officials' memoirs.<sup>43</sup> However, when considered in conjunction with contemporary testimony, it becomes clear that retrospective accounts such as Allen's did not invent that which was not felt at the time. Rather, such memoirs looked back to a time when it was felt that things could be done in accordance with established metropolitan ideas of what constituted 'good' imperial governance. The degree to which the British felt confident in their own collective ability to put their wishes into actions was usually very high. Frank Hallier, as District Officer at Moshi in Tanganyika, reported in his diary how at a meeting with approximately five hundred Africans, including chiefs and headmen, he had put across, and got an agreement to, the point that 'forced marriages as was the old custom were now

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<sup>40</sup> J. G. C. Allen, 'Nigeria panorama - 1926-1966', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1551/48

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.1551/10

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.1551/48

<sup>43</sup> For example, J. L. Giblin, 'Review of *Tanzania: Journey to republic* by Randal Sadleir', in *Journal of African history* 42 (2001), p.150

undesirable and unsatisfactory.’<sup>44</sup> This is significant, because it seems doubtful that Hallier would have put across an opinion in front of such a large crowd had he lacked confidence in what he was doing or felt that his actions would not have been backed by a strong British imperial structure. Irrespective of the degree to which his African audience agreed with his beliefs, making such a speech still required a definite, unequivocal line be taken by Hallier. Similarly, he was quite prepared to argue his corner in letters to his superiors over matters that he felt had the potential to hold up progress.<sup>45</sup>

This confidence undoubtedly fed into a positive sense of imperial mission and of British ability. Of Rufiji, in the south of Tanganyika, Hallier felt moved to say that ‘I think it can be safely said, with judicious control of exports, this district should never suffer from famine, and given normal seasons, should always have a considerable surplus for export’,<sup>46</sup> helped by the Rufiji Valley’s ‘rich’ soil, ‘secure’ water supply, low crime rates and a confidence as to the future of trade in the area.<sup>47</sup> While in this instance he felt that changing

[n]ative methods [of cultivation] will naturally be slow, and difficult... I do not think, [sic] that should discourage one. Instruction and example would in my opinion, go a long way to obtain these ends. An agricultural experimental farm, where young and intelligent natives could be instructed and eventually sent out amongst the natives at once suggests itself.<sup>48</sup>

Putting to one side the fact that this reinforces the point that Hallier was enthusiastic, confident, and prepared to think up and put forward new means of facilitating knowledge transfer to facilitate what he believed would be in the best interests of the region, this all

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<sup>44</sup> F. C. Hallier, diaries, 30 October 1926, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/65

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Hallier to Pelham, undated [c.1923], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/2; see also Hallier, ‘Report regarding tour of inspection of Mbulu sub-district’ to Chief Secretary to the Government, 5 November 1923, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/53

<sup>46</sup> Hallier, ‘Annual report, Rufiji District 1920’, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/3

<sup>47</sup> Hallier, ‘Annual report, Rufiji District 1920’, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/3, 7, 11

<sup>48</sup> Hallier, ‘Annual report, Rufiji District 1920’, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/3; see also Hallier, diaries, 19 October 1926, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/59



contributed to a faith that, given the existence of a new-found stability, the Africans under him would continue to improve in administrative ability, and rapidly so in certain areas.<sup>49</sup>

However, it is possible that diary entries and reports such as Hallier's were self-aggrandising at the expense of a faithful rendering of what really happened in such meetings. Taking this line, self-aggrandisement could be viewed as psychological compensation, an attempt to convince oneself and ones peers that one was as confident as the ideal colonial official type represented in literature. Thus, it could be construed that any evidence that seems to suggest the British exhibited bravado was in fact suggestive of a nervousness as to their ability to change Africa, or as to the strength of the Empire, or both.

Given the influence of metropolitan thought upon officials, this lack of confidence seems distinctly unlikely. Such influence was great because, to a significant degree, the British relied on what the press were telling them of the wider world. Ian Douglas, an Audit Inspector in Khartoum in the early 'twenties, was continually asked by his family to describe the relationship between Egypt and the Sudan, immediately before and after the mutiny of late November 1924. On more than one occasion, Douglas admitted that he knew very little of the situation from personal experience, and that in all likelihood his family was better informed than he was.<sup>50</sup>

In recognition of his self-ignorance on this matter, Douglas relied on the knowledge of others to fill in the gaps where personal experience was lacking. He recommended to his brother the 'first class review' *Round Table*, in which there was a 'very good article on the Sudan' that could explain all.<sup>51</sup> In this article, Egyptian calls for a political union between Egypt and the Sudan were categorically refuted because they not only 'totally' ignored the 'rights' of Britain, they also took 'no account of the interests of a third party, pre-eminently entitled to consideration in the matter – the people of the Sudan', who the British were doing so much to help.<sup>52</sup> The article went on to argue that the 'day is indeed still distant when any

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<sup>49</sup> Hallier, 'Annual report, Arusha District 1923', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/46

<sup>50</sup> I. W. Douglas to sister, 5 December 1924, SAD 707/9/12; Douglas to brother, 27 April 1925, SAD 707/9/38

<sup>51</sup> Douglas to brother, 9 October 1924, SAD 707/9/9

<sup>52</sup> 'Egypt and the Sudan', in *The Round Table* 56 (1924), p.672

part of the Sudan can safely be entrusted to unaided native administration'; that, although an increase of indigenous self-government was not objected to in principle, and was in fact 'the natural line of development', to talk of the country as a separate state, one 'might as well talk of the independence of an infant school.'<sup>53</sup>

The overall tone of the piece was in keeping with the ideas of those like Lugard who were ultimately optimistic as to the future of the relationship between Britain and Africa. There was a natural way to attain development – via the adoption of indirect rule – and all that was required for stability and progress to be attained was for the British to keep on doing what they were doing; those doubting Africans would see how benevolent the British were in the end.<sup>54</sup> This and other British cultural products directly informed Douglas' optimism. Thus in 1923, while he noted disaffection among certain Egyptian clerks, he did not 'think the idea of the British leaving the Sudan to Egypt would find any favour with the Sudanese'.<sup>55</sup> When the mutiny came, he found the event to be a rather trifling matter, and less than two weeks later, in a letter to his sister of December 1924, he was talking happily, recommending books that he thought were good in the same tone of voice that he used throughout the 'twenties.<sup>56</sup> Of course, while Douglas may have been downplaying events partly to reassure loved ones at home, this dismissal of the attempted rebellion was certainly in keeping with his general character. He enjoyed light-hearted works such as the novels of P. G. Wodehouse,<sup>57</sup> bestsellers – he thought *The Forsyte saga* 'extraordinarily good'<sup>58</sup> – as well as more serious works of fiction, such as Conrad's *Chance*.<sup>59</sup> But he liked such serious works, not because they were felt to reflect some sort of sombre reality, but because they told a good adventure tale without using sex to keep the reader interested; Conrad's *Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* being a case in point for him.<sup>60</sup> He thought H. G. Wells' utopian *Men like Gods* a 'silly book'; like many of

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp.672-3

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.682

<sup>55</sup> Douglas to brother, [January 1923], SAD 707/7/37; emphasis in original.

<sup>56</sup> Douglas to sister, 5 December 1924, SAD 707/9/12-3

<sup>57</sup> Douglas to mother, 5 October 1922, SAD 707/6/21

<sup>58</sup> Douglas to mother, 19 October 1923, SAD 707/8/26-7

<sup>59</sup> Douglas to mother, 19 October 1923, SAD 707/8/27

<sup>60</sup> Douglas to mother, 16 June 1925, SAD 707/9/45-6; see also Douglas to mother, 29 January 1928, SAD 707/10/13

his metropolitan peers, Douglas felt that Wells had become too propagandistic to be able to tell a story well.<sup>61</sup> Douglas was light-hearted and pragmatic, but he carried with him a deep sense that the benefits of empire for the Africa had demonstrated that the British were up to the challenge of making the Sudan a 'better' place.<sup>62</sup>

This deep sense of British ability was not a one-off, or a collection of sentiments present solely in the early- to mid-'twenties, but was a recurring theme throughout the interwar period. Writing in his private diary in 1938, an S.P.S. member, John Daniell wrote here

one is in Khartoum some 53 years after Gordin [sic] was so brutally murdered... Ordered government where before was a disordered rabble; loyalty to the British rule where was antagonism to its emissary. And above all a contented people, once oppressed, later imposed upon and now treated at their true value.<sup>63</sup>

Daniell was deeply affected by what he read. Upon finishing Richard Aldington's *Death of a hero*, which concerns the loss of life suffered during the First World War, Daniell noted in his diary that he was struck 'as never before and especially at this time of uncertainty in Europe... [by] the horrible thought of all one's own generation being wiped out, served up as cannon fodder'.<sup>64</sup> When visiting the battlefield of Omdurman, thoughts turned to Kitchener; Daniell stood 'critically... of him as a general, in awe of him as an organiser'.<sup>65</sup> This was similar to the way Kitchener was portrayed by metropolitan commentators of the mid- to late-'thirties. Kitchener had been criticised by some for his handling of campaigns such as the Dardanelles during the Great War, but it was not until the 'thirties that he started to be

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<sup>61</sup> Douglas to mother, 25 May 1925, SAD 707/9/41

<sup>62</sup> Douglas to brother, 23 March 1926, SAD 707/10/3-4

<sup>63</sup> J. P. S. Daniell, diaries, 29 August 1938, SAD 777/13/26

<sup>64</sup> Daniell, diaries, 25 September 1938, SAD 777/13/34

<sup>65</sup> Daniell, diaries, 6 September 1938, SAD 777/13/28

criticised publicly for the way he had handled the taking of the Sudan.<sup>66</sup> It was also in keeping with the trend noted in chapter one, whereby certain imperial figures previously held to be 'untouchable' came under an increased, though limited, amount of criticism as the interwar years progressed. Aside from this, Daniell remained for the most part upbeat, and was sure of the validity of British secular actions in Africa.<sup>67</sup> Daniell was a reader of *The Times* and a fan of adventure works such as *The four feathers*, as well as those detailing early travels by explorers such as John Speke; all of these are reflected in his opinion that an involvement in empire was a trailblazing and rather exciting, but morally correct, activity.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, a pro-activism and confidence was also borne from the fact that for the most part the British *enjoyed* their work in Africa. The British of the interwar period were more upbeat than not. Consequently, so were the colonial officials. While some complained about niggling issues, the standard of living for an Englishman in Africa could be very good.<sup>69</sup> And even if there was a lot to do, most relished this business. On trek, one D.O. in Northern Nigeria wrote that 'being fully occupied I am fully contented.'<sup>70</sup> Economically the colonial official was stable, too. Retrenchment in the early 'thirties did not affect the colonial official as much as might be assumed, or, at least not personally. While considerations of economy led to salaries being cut by 7.5% in Tanganyika, living in the bush was still deemed to be cheap, a point compounded by the fact that no income tax was charged on colonial official incomes until the Second World War.<sup>71</sup> In Kenya this decrease was only 2.5%, even if touring and mileage allowances were reduced by 25 and 50 percent respectively.<sup>72</sup> Colonial officials were largely successful in defending themselves against budget cuts. For instance, in the Sudan in 1931 it was decided that while the number of S.P.S. staff should not be increased, any drastic

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<sup>66</sup> For instance, compare 'Peace in the East', in *The Times*, 1 July 1920, p.12 to 'Book of the day: Haig – Mr. Duff Cooper's life', in *The Times*, 3 October 1935, p.6; see also T. Royle, *The Kitchener enigma* (London, 1985)

<sup>67</sup> Daniell, diaries, 26 October 1938, SAD 777/13/44. On missionary activity he reserved judgement; Daniell, diaries, 12 November 1938, SAD 777/13/48

<sup>68</sup> Daniell, diaries, 9 May 1938, SAD 777/13/3; Daniell, diaries, 16 August 1938, SAD 777/13/6; Daniell, diaries, 28 September 1938, SAD 777/13/7

<sup>69</sup> O. H. Best to mother, undated [1920], RHO Mss.Afr.r.228/9-11

<sup>70</sup> Percival, diaries, 11 September 1930, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.364(2)/28

<sup>71</sup> Popplewell, 'Random recollections', RHO Mss.Afr.s.2156/36

<sup>72</sup> Kirk-Greene, *On crown service*, p.24

cut would lead to a decrease in revenue and stability; consequently in June 1931 only 93 out of 1032 British posts were cut, and even then few of the jobs that went were political official posts.<sup>73</sup> Whatever grumbles the British had with Africa, the climate and, for some, the distance from 'civilized' company, on the whole they enjoyed what they did. Such positivity fed directly into a sense that they could get things done, and was itself reinforced in a circular manner. A sense of responsibility engendered a belief that things could get done, which further heightened the perception of being in a position of responsibility.

This confidence was underpinned by the same sense of right that was extolled by metropolitan commentators, and was felt to have been borne out by the results attained in the continent so far. For Robert Mayall writing in 1940, when one

remembers the anarchy and dwindling population of the Dervish regime and compares it with the rule of law and order in the Sudan to-day, it will be seen that the primary aim of our administration has gone a very long way towards being fulfilled, and I hope to show... that its second aim – the production of a race of Sudanese capable of ruling themselves – is also some considerable way towards realisation.<sup>74</sup>

This endorsement of British activity in Africa was not undermined by the existence of any widespread opposition to urbanization or trade. Charles Willis was pleased by the rapid development of shop sites in Malakal in the Sudan's Upper Nile Province, of which he was governor between 1926 and 1931.<sup>75</sup> This sort of enterprise, he believed, had an important role to play in facilitating imperial rule. Early into his time there, he wrote that the crucial task ahead of him was to effect a 'reintegration', or reconciliation, of the Upper Nile peoples with government, a process that would be difficult given such peoples were 'ignorant and

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<sup>73</sup> Daly, *Empire on the Nile*, pp.436-7

<sup>74</sup> Mayall, memoirs, SAD 851/7/9

<sup>75</sup> C. A. Willis to D. S. Willis, 13 December 1926, SAD 209/12/9

superstitious, and they look on any new idea with a suspicious eye'.<sup>76</sup> As predicted, this proved a difficult task. The ongoing battle against superstition, and the influence of 'anti-government' forces upon the Nuer, Willis informed his successor in 1931, necessitated change. Alongside the introduction of modern transportation, medicine and education, part of this change would be brought about by an alteration in the way wealth was generated, including an increase in trade with other areas of the Sudan and the wider world.<sup>77</sup>

Willis was a man with a great deal of experience in Sudan, having gone to work there in 1905, filling various positions including Director of Intelligence, which he held from 1920 until his move to the Upper Nile Province. But such ideas were shared by Britons who were less experienced than Willis and who operated in other parts of Africa. For Humphrey Amherst, an administrator working in the Gold Coast and new to Africa in 1924, the improved ability of Africans to engage in trade was only to be welcomed. He countered the reluctance of African parents to send their children to school by making the case to them that 'a boy is none the worse a farmer for being able to read and write and knowing a trade and is certainly a better trader'.<sup>78</sup> Traders and trading were not viewed in a negative manner. Instead, one of the key aims for the British was to encourage Africans 'to sell regularly all the year round', for which easy access to local markets was essential.<sup>79</sup>

Western-informed notions of what constituted acceptability permeated the trading sphere just as much as they did other areas of African life. In Tanganyika, Lionel Vickers-Haviland welcomed an increase in indigenous trading. He felt it would bring an increase in general well-being among Africans. To this end, the

Indian or Arab trader in the bush... constitutes a valuable stimulus to trade but  
the majority of the small bazaar traders in Bukoba and Kamachumu serve no

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<sup>76</sup> Willis, 'A brief survey of policy of the Sudan government in the Upper Nile', [c.June 1927], SAD 212/10/3

<sup>77</sup> Willis, 'Handing over notes: Upper Nile Province', [1931], SAD 212/11/1-34, 212/13/1-59

<sup>78</sup> Amherst, diaries, 10 September 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/38

<sup>79</sup> Hallier to Pelham, undated [c.1923], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1072/2

economic purpose and prejudice fair competition by their commercial immorality.<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, for the ordinary D.C., as for Willis, an increase in African trade was linked inextricably to development. In a letter to his aunt from Northern Nigeria in 1925, George Trinick wrote 'as you will know, indirect rule is the method employed, so that if satisfactory, the hereditary chiefs carry on in the fashion they have been used to, and things go along pretty smoothly.'<sup>81</sup> This infers an attachment to the static societal management that Cannadine and others have pointed to, rather than reformist intervention. This is not the case. 'During his 15 years out here', Trinick wrote of Falk, the D.O. at Abonnema, 'he has seen many changes. The last 10 years, he said, has seen tremendous progress. Let us hope it will continue.'<sup>82</sup> What sort of progress? Trinick wanted the Nigerians living on the delta with whom he came into contact to integrate more fully into a modernised monetary economy,<sup>83</sup> and had high hopes for economic development, informing his mother that the

African + Eastern have established a factory here since I was last here so like the farmers I suppose all the companies are living on their losses, I don't think. In this backwater, there are three strong companies posts within a few hundred yards of each other... There is either a lot of trade, or anticipated trade going to start, for a white agents [sic] salary... [means] a post is expensive to keep going.<sup>84</sup>

Both the British and the Africans, it was felt, would benefit from an increase in, and a more modern form of, trade. For some British officials, this wish led to embracing the idea of cooperatives, that is, groups of producers joined together in buying raw goods, before selling

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<sup>80</sup> L. A. W. Vickers-Haviland, 'Annual report: Bukoba 1926', 3 January 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1047(4)/540-1

<sup>81</sup> Trinick to aunt, 1 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/31

<sup>82</sup> Trinick to mother, 23 August 1922, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/28

<sup>83</sup> Trinick to aunt, 1 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/30-1

<sup>84</sup> Trinick to mother, 13 April 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/39-40; emphasis in original.

their produce collectively, as a means of enhancing their economic strength and marketing power. In the early- to mid-'thirties, William Walker, an administrator in the Gold Coast, entered into a correspondence with C. F. Strickland. Strickland had a lengthy relationship with cooperatives, having worked on behalf of the British government in surveying the possibility of their being established in India, Malaya and Palestine. In 1933 the government in Lagos had commissioned Strickland to report on the viability of co-operatives in Nigeria, which resulted in the Co-operative Societies Ordinance of 1935. In his *Co-operation for Africa* (1933), of which Walker was an avid fan, Strickland presented the introduction of cooperatives to Africa as a way for local producers to improve their financial statures, and one of the best methods of effecting developmental change.<sup>85</sup> Walker quickly came to believe that the economic development of the Gold Coast was 'absolutely dependent on cooperation'.<sup>86</sup> This was pitched to Africans as essential for rapid change; the 'Nzima man likes to walk alone', he wrote to those within his jurisdiction, but if this continued 'you will take a, [sic] long time to reach prosperity. If you walk together you will get there quickly. Try to walk together.'<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, administrators welcomed and encouraged both an increased British economic involvement in Africa and the establishment of more indigenous intra-continental enterprise. Officials' universalistic conceptions of 'economic purpose', 'fair competition', 'commercial immorality' and so on were inextricably linked to the white trading posts that Trinick wanted, and the reformed version of indigenous trading that Vickers-Haviland envisaged. A desire for all of this was partly for selfish reasons, for commercial intensification would enable officials to purchase more easily those British goods they believed would make their lives more comfortable. Colonial officials also welcomed the introduction of such increased

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<sup>85</sup> C. F. Strickland, *Co-operation for Africa* (London, 1933), passim, especially p.50; Strickland, 'The cooperative movement in the East', in *Royal Institute of International Affairs* 11 (1932), pp.812-32

<sup>86</sup> W. A. R. Walker, 'Handing over notes, Axim District-Mr. W. A. H. Walker to Mr. G. E. C. Wisdom', [n.d.], RHO Mss.Afr.1709(4)/27

<sup>87</sup> Walker to 'The chiefs of Ayinasi, Awiabo, Bassake and Amihereblebokoso and to their people', 26 September 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1709(4)/30-41; see also Strickland to Walker, 12 December 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1709(1)/98-102; Walker, trek diary report, September 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1709(4)/15, 27



trading because they felt it would keep Africans happy, so making administration easier. In this they shared not only the pro-commercial views of the majority of British metropolitan commentators, but also the views of those whose work they had been exposed to during their periods of training immediately prior to their leaving for Africa. For instance, for Lugard, attempting to bring about an increase in trade was an essential part of the colonial officials' role.<sup>88</sup> Those responsible for the training of new recruits made their young charges aware of this perceived necessity. One of the questions posed by the Colonial Services Probationers exam in December 1929 asked 'What do you understand by the 'Dual Mandate' and how far can the conception be applied to the economic development of African territories?'<sup>89</sup> Colonial officials were, in the main, not anti-trade, due largely to their intellectual engagement with metropolitan ideas.

The second of the alleged prejudices of the colonial official was the 'equation of the town with vice and the bush with virtue'. And yet the division between those who felt themselves 'bush' D.C.s and those who felt themselves 'town' D.C.s, despite initial appearances, was not a wide gulf. For 'bush' D.C.s, being away from the town was a relief usually borne, not of a wish to be away from sites of change and new ideas as much as possible, but of a desire to develop an area according to one's own aims. The perception of the bush as a 'blank canvas' dominated amongst these officials, who revelled in the notion that they were altering Africa for the better in accordance with their own particular preoccupations, which allowed other areas of African life to remain 'traditional'. Thus the average official did not oscillate between irreconcilable romanticist and reformist concepts of what to do with Africa; he believed in both simultaneously. Concurrently, while advocating a type of change that was closely tied to the modernity of the urbanised social environment that he enjoyed, the 'town' D.C. nevertheless espoused the same romanticised views about this modernity that hark back to the ideas of George L. Mosse discussed in chapter one. Thus, despite some differences between 'town' and 'bush' D.C.s, these must not be overstated.

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<sup>88</sup> Lugard, *The rise*, Volume One, pp.585-7; Lugard, *Dual mandate*, passim, for example pp.205-13, 606-19

<sup>89</sup> 'Colonial services probationers exam Thursday, December 5', [1929], in RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.364(1)/1

A desire to work away from the bureaucratic centre was the most common reason for wanting to operate as a 'bush' D.C.. William Ward, Master at Achimota between 1924 and 1940, later recalled meeting an official from one of the Gold Coast's 'remotest corners' (in other words, one of the places furthest away from Accra and the coast). The official relished his life, not because it gave him the chance to shirk work, but because central government could affect him less than had he lived closer to an urban centre, meaning that he could reconfigure the area he governed in a manner that he wanted.<sup>90</sup> He enjoyed living such a busy life, and that he was 'not only district commissioner and district magistrate and district superintendent of roads and works... he was district accountant and district treasurer.'<sup>91</sup> Writing to his mother from Jos in Nigeria, Michael Hoyle showed a wish to build in 'interesting', 'out-of-the-way' places.<sup>92</sup> When working for Shell in Tanganyika in the late 'thirties, the author Roald Dahl stayed in Tabora with the officer in charge of the area, Robert Sanford. Dahl asked Sanford "Do you like this sort of life?" Though evidently paraphrasing, his recollection of Sanford's answer is emphatic enough; while missing the company of other white men, "I love the freedom," he said. "I administer about two thousand square miles of territory and I can go where I want and do more or less exactly as I please. That part of it is marvellous."<sup>93</sup> These sorts of sentiments were a key reason why some services were accorded respect; one District Commissioner noted how 'the Uganda officials regard the S.P.S. with envy chiefly because Governors and District Commissioners in the Sudan run their own show very much more than they do in Uganda.'<sup>94</sup>

Regardless of any retrospective attempts at aggrandisement by men such as Ward, the point of note here is that these men were not anti-civilization by wanting to go where other white men had not gone before, rather they wished to be the first to 'open up' the country for others to follow in their footsteps. The initial appearance of a dichotomy between an enjoyment of the 'wild' and the act of changing this 'wild' may be reconciled by an appreciation of the

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<sup>90</sup> W. Ward, 'My Africa', RHO Mss.Afr.r.127/10-1

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.r.127/10

<sup>92</sup> Hoyle to mother, 18 July 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.718(1)

<sup>93</sup> R. Dahl, *Going solo* (1986; Harmondsworth, 1987), p.32

<sup>94</sup> J. N. Richardson, 'Comparative note on the S.P.S. and the Colonial Civil Service in Uganda', 28 March 1931, CO 323/1162/5

selfish approach to empire and a delight in trailblazing. There is a clear link between officials' desired roles in Africa and the adventure fiction they had absorbed as children and which they continued to engage with while in Africa. After all, Edgar Wallace's Sanders and Rider Haggard's Allan Quatermain, two literary creations that colonial officials loved to revisit again and again,<sup>95</sup> were heroes who were able to escape the domesticity of home while upholding the values of British society. J. W. Robertson, started his long S.P.S. career in 1922, in Rufa'a in the Blue Nile Province, and was a fan of adventure stories by authors such as Buchan and Stevenson, as well as classic romantic adventure texts such as Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*.<sup>96</sup> He treated his work as an administrator as a ripping adventure throughout the interwar period, and he delighted in meeting new people and visiting new places. If he did not quite pitch himself as Buchan's Richard Hannay did, then he at least saw what he did as an adventurous departure from what a life in Britain could have afforded him.<sup>97</sup> And yet, this romantic notion was clearly linked to the developmental ideas of men such as Lord Lugard. Robertson read *The dual mandate* in 1923 and thought highly of it; he felt the work was relevant because many of the problems that existed in the Sudan were the same as those that Lugard had faced in Nigeria.<sup>98</sup> Robertson was also an avid reader of *The Times* and *Punch*, among other publications.<sup>99</sup> He had a clear sense of patriotic duty and had no qualms about advocating change when it was felt that pre-existing institutions were contrary to what was deemed 'right', such as replacing the 'stultifying and deadening' khalwa, (Islamic school), with a 'modern' Westernised education system.<sup>100</sup> Thus both a romanticist sentiment and a developmental mindset were borne from a proactive adventurism.

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<sup>95</sup> Owen, *Memoirs*, [1960-1], SAD 769/11/8; Lea to parents, 7 January 1927, SAD 645/7/18

<sup>96</sup> J. W. Robertson to sister, 20 April 1923, SAD 531/2/84; Robertson to mother, 22 February 1923, SAD 531/2/63; Robertson to mother, 26 April 1932, SAD 531/3/26

<sup>97</sup> Robertson to mother, 4 January 1923, SAD 531/2/20; Robertson to sister, 26 January 1923, SAD 531/2/43-5; Robertson to mother, 10 February 1923, SAD 531/2/51-2

<sup>98</sup> Robertson to father, 20 May 1923, SAD 531/2/90

<sup>99</sup> Robertson to mother, 4 January 1923, SAD 531/2/27; Robertson to mother, 18 January 1923, SAD 531/2/34; Robertson to mother, 23 January 1923, SAD 531/2/38; Robertson to mother, 27 February 1923, SAD 531/2/68

<sup>100</sup> For example, Robertson to mother, 29 November 1922, SAD 531/2/2; Robertson, 'Handing over notes on West Kordofan', [October 1936], SAD 517/3/41; Robertson to sister, 22 March 1933, SAD 513/2/81

Colonial officials liked to feel as though they were men who 'did' things, and could re-ratify a sense of masculinity grounded in hard work and outdoor activity. The metropolitan cultural manifestations of this sensibility were widespread; after all, approximately 34% of all males born in Britain between 1901 and 1920 belonged to the Boy Scouts.<sup>101</sup> The belief that an active life was key to national strength was held most fervently by those middle-class males who had been raised in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods or, in other words, those who formed the bulk of the interwar colonial official ranks. And the job of colonial officials was a living of that type of active life bar none.

Returning to perceptions of Africa, the extent to which officials were steeped in metropolitan thought prevented any aversion to town and trade becoming widespread. In addition, such beliefs were enhanced by more specific perceptions of Africa and the African, the nature of pre-colonial Africa, and its capacity for change. Africa was in need of alteration, the argument went, and it was malleable enough for changes to be made confidently, boundless enough for changes to be made fearlessly.

Africa could and should be changed, the line went, because the continent was vast and robust, and the British were responsible. The areas where life took root, it was believed, provided virtually limitless resources. The possibility of several hundred colonial officials being able to strip Africa of a significant amount of its natural resources struck these same officials as an impossibility. For one administrator in Tanganyika, game was 'plentiful' and, while it was believed that tribes such as the Wanyika were doing the most damage to animal reserves, in interwar Tanganyika there was still felt to be plenty of game left.<sup>102</sup> When George Trinick was 'snag-busting' in Nigeria, the explosives killed lots of fish. When they floated to the surface the Africans would collect some but 'hundreds float away dead, though I suppose that doesn't constitute a flea bite to the number of all sorts of fish in these rivers.'<sup>103</sup>

That Africa was, for the colonial official, robust enough to stand up to change ties in directly with the content of speeches that Cameron, Ormsby-Gore and others gave to officials

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<sup>101</sup> Wilkinson, 'English youth movements', p.3

<sup>102</sup> Popplewell, 'Random recollections', RHO Mss.Afr.s.2156/35, 56

<sup>103</sup> Trinick to mother, 13 April 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.926/39

in training for African service, as the papers of Tanganyika official William Tripe attest.<sup>104</sup> Governmental elites were not yet emphasising preservation to any significant degree in the interwar years. Instead, they focussed on development and generating wealth. Thus there was a keenness to portray Africa as a vast, bountiful continent. Definitions were framed accordingly. Ormsby-Gore described ecologists not as environmentalists, as they are frequently viewed today, but as those who sought to establish the best conditions necessary for something to grow to its fullest potential with the greatest efficiency.<sup>105</sup> Environmental management, by this definition, was not about 'protection' or 'conservation', but about managing Africa so that as much as possible could be taken from areas deemed economically valuable, only for Africa to replenish itself and the whole cycle to start again.<sup>106</sup>

This was the mentality that was handed down to those in charge of handling African resources. Here, records provided by Herbert Moor, who went on to become Conservator of Forests in the Gold Coast from 1923, are illuminating. Moor's lecture notes, taken in 1913 while studying at the Imperial Forestry Research Institute and College at Dehradun in the north of India reveal this mentality; regarding the 'object of forestry', if a forest was thought to be managed for economic purposes, 'such considerations as the peculiar conditions of existing crops, the power of withstanding external dangers, protection of the soil' and so on only allowed a 'modification' of financial aims for that forest, rather than their overhauling.<sup>107</sup> In other words, if it was decided that there was a financial gain to be made from a forest, the generation of money was to remain the principal aim.

By contrast, Africans were frequently labelled wasteful in those areas the British felt were not abundant. For instance, one colonial official accused certain agricultural tribes in the Ogoja District of Nigeria of being greedy and wasteful for gaining more land without subsequently seeking to improve its quality. In situations like this, it was felt that it was up to

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<sup>104</sup> Tripe to parents, 8 February 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.868, File 1/16

<sup>105</sup> Ormsby-Gore, 'Agricultural research', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 33 (1934), p.18; see also Ormsby-Gore, 'Economic development', pp.240-53

<sup>106</sup> Ormsby-Gore, 'Agricultural research', pp.18-21

<sup>107</sup> H. W. Moor, 'Object of forestry', [1913], RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.333/33; see also 'Forest utilisation: Reports by Mr. Cameron', CO 583/191/7/10-23

the British to ensure Africans treated the continent in a sustainable manner.<sup>108</sup> This was in keeping with what was imparted to colonial officials during their training. For instance, in the December 1929 round of the Colonial Probationers exam, one of the questions was 'What are the chief drawbacks to the agricultural practices in common use amongst natives of tropical Africa? In what directions are changes likely to take place in the future?'<sup>109</sup> The belief that it was the Africans, and not the British, who were potentially irresponsible custodians of the land was, as has already been seen, also a key part of what interwar metropolitan geographers and other figures such as Lugard had to say of agricultural matters.<sup>110</sup> It was evidently incomprehensible that British ideas of land management could be inferior to African ones.

The belief that the British were responsible custodians of Africa extended beyond flora to fauna, despite officials' enthusiastic involvement in certain activities now seen as contradicting this. Plenty of officials were keen on shooting wild animals.<sup>111</sup> Men such as C. H. B. Grant in Tanganyika justified this activity, citing instances of wild animals' attacking Africans and of hippos and elephants trampling crops, as proof that officials' shooting was not irresponsible.<sup>112</sup> In fact, hunters believed themselves to be lovers of the environment too.<sup>113</sup> That Grant apparently recognised no contradiction between his hunting in Tanganyika until the end of 1932, and his taking up a post at London's Natural History Museum in January 1933, is of interest. His actions again hark back to the metropolitan geographers, who demarcated the killing of animals as 'responsible' and 'irresponsible', along a strictly black/white axis that extended to all interactions with the African landscape. The shooting of animals could be further justified by the argument that it added to public knowledge, as glass

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<sup>108</sup> N. A. C. Weir, 'Ogoja Province, Abakaliki Division Annual Report, 1931', 7 January 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(4)/48-94

<sup>109</sup> 'Colonial services probationers exam Wednesday, December 4', [1929], in RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.364(1)/5

<sup>110</sup> See also W. Wolmer and I. Scoones, 'The science of "civilized" agriculture: The mixed farming discourse in Zimbabwe', in *African affairs* 99 (2000), p.577

<sup>111</sup> Mrs C. H. B. Grant, 'Notes regarding C. H. B. Grant in Tanganyika, 1913-32', RHO Mss.Afr.s.141.ff356-67

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, RHO Mss.Afr.s.141.f357

<sup>113</sup> This is similar to the actions of US President Theodore 'Teddy' Roosevelt; E. I. Steinhart, 'Hunters, poachers and gamekeepers: Towards a social history of hunting in colonial Kenya', in *Journal of African history* 30 (1989), pp.247-64

cabinets full of stuffed animals in provincial museums today still testify. If an action had the effect of improving man's understanding of the wider world, it could not be irresponsible.<sup>114</sup>

This idea that officials were the ones who knew what was best for the African environment is borne out most starkly by the relationship between this environment and disease. It was believed, for instance, that locusts could be reduced in number by removing shrub from vast areas of the countryside; locusts were despised by officials,<sup>115</sup> (as well as by the Africans themselves), and thus where they were a blight upon the crop harvest, a reduction in scrub vegetation which, at any rate, was usually deemed 'ugly', was not a problem, but a good thing. Similarly, cutting away trees and bush was deemed an effective way of dealing with tsetse fly.<sup>116</sup> For men such as Francis Dowsett in Tanganyika, this desire to modify the environment for the purposes of restoring a sense of normality to Africa was a constant pre-occupation for the very reason that the defeating of disease was an all-consuming concern.<sup>117</sup> The African landscape could be changed for the better, it was felt, because such an act of change was made in the name of improving health.<sup>118</sup>

There was no deep-rooted attachment to those areas of land that were deemed 'ugly'. Conversely, it was felt that the British would be able to preserve those areas that were deemed beautiful, but such preservation in one area did not undermine an ability to develop elsewhere. This sense of geographically discrete borders within which any alterations of the continent were to be made was tied in with metropolitan ideas. In 1928 *The Times* wrote that African wildlife was to be protected only in areas where this could be done 'without injury to the African cultivator or stockraiser';<sup>119</sup> thus those animals that were to be protected were those living in areas where they could not harm human interests, which were to remain paramount. In other words, both metropolitan commentators and colonial officials' commitment to the preservation of anything in Africa was made on the basis that such a

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<sup>114</sup> For example, Parkinson, diaries, 7 November 1938, RHO Mss.Afr.s.835/23

<sup>115</sup> For one of many examples of this, see J. E. Griffiths, diaries, 3 February 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.r.179/26

<sup>116</sup> Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p.274

<sup>117</sup> Dowsett, letter to parents, 30 April 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/57; Dowsett, letter to parents, 20 June 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/69-70

<sup>118</sup> Beeton, diaries, [1935], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1608(9)/passim

<sup>119</sup> 'African wild life', in *The Times*, 25 May 1938, p.17

commitment was of value to humans; preservation was not across whole species of flora or fauna, but across particular geographical areas where such change would be of benefit to economic development and human welfare.<sup>120</sup>

One can go further. Africa both necessitated change, due to its 'unreformed' state, and condoned change, because of its ability to absorb alteration when guided by those who felt themselves to be responsible and dutiful. Once again, the relationship of the colonial official to the land under his charge speaks of a consistency of purpose borne out of romantic and pragmatic factors being joined together as part of the same administering impulse. It is when we turn to road construction that we can witness this conjunction of the pragmatic and the romantic most effectively. A desire to build roads was one of the most persistent among British colonial officials. In this, officials endorsed successive metropolitan governments' policies,<sup>121</sup> whose prioritisation of communications also received endorsement by *The Times*.<sup>122</sup> Officials deemed roads a necessity for the successful integration of an area into a wider economy. Reporting from Nigeria and the Cameroons, John Brayne-Baker argued that point exactly. Furthermore, in one area local chiefs had apparently been asking for a road 'for many years and it is absolutely essential that it should be provided as soon as possible.'<sup>123</sup> A similar mindset is suggested by a variety of other sources, such as the detailed accounts of road construction in Tanganyikan official Edward Lumley's memoirs,<sup>124</sup> the language used in the handing over notes written by J. M. Fremantle, a Resident at Niger in the late 'twenties,<sup>125</sup> and the amount of photographs of road building in the British Cameroons in Albert Bridges' archival collection.<sup>126</sup>

As for officials wishing to 'make a mark', roads in Africa were, it was felt, a key part of taming and underpinning the change from savagery to stability. When carrying out extensive

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<sup>120</sup> Beeton, diaries, [1935], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1608(9)/passim

<sup>121</sup> Meredith, 'The British government and colonial economic policy', pp.489-92

<sup>122</sup> 'Motor-roads in Africa', in *The Times*, 10 October 1928, p.17

<sup>123</sup> J. Brayne-Baker, 'Annual report on the Obudu District for the year 1937', RHO Mss.Afr.s.311/10-1, quote at f.11; see also Brayne-Baker, 'I liked it out there', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1926/20

<sup>124</sup> E. K. Lumley, *Forgotten mandate: A British District Officer in Tanganyika* (London, 1976), pp.70-4

<sup>125</sup> J. M. Fremantle, 'Handing-over notes', 30 December 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.230

<sup>126</sup> A. F. Bridges, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1881(2)



surveys of the districts he was in, Grant 'took a particular delight in visiting areas where few or no Europeans had penetrated... On these surveys new roads were prospected or opened up and in later years he was always pleased to learn that Railway and P. W. D. engineers prospecting for new lines and roads found his work accurate.'<sup>127</sup> Thus road-building, something that may have seemed mundane in Britain, became a romanticised activity in Africa, evidently closely linked to the sort of mentality generated by the Boy Scouts, adventure novels, and so on. Whether or not one accepts modern theories that the British were motivated towards empire-building in part because of a subconscious desire to subjugate a sexualised African landscape,<sup>128</sup> colonial officials did share in a metropolitan desire for a 'taming' development to take place. This delight in construction, however, was not merely confirmed to the building of roads. The photographic collection that forms part of the Sudan Archive in Durham demonstrates this admirably, indicating that colonial officials felt the construction of railways,<sup>129</sup> quays,<sup>130</sup> dams,<sup>131</sup> canals<sup>132</sup> and bridges<sup>133</sup> were all of sufficient interest to warrant their being documented in extensive detail.

All of these ideas regarding the need for change, and the ability of Africa to accept this change, were part of a wider current of interwar thinking. For modern scholars who stress the conservatism of colonial officials, the natural response to all of the above would be to argue that officials' endorsements of metropolitan ideas was all lip service, that on paper they endorsed a liberality that they did not genuinely feel to justify to others why they were in the continent in the first place. However, this fails to take into account a more pressing matter. As mentioned above with regards to trade, by making changes to both the land and to the

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<sup>127</sup> Grant, 'Notes', RHO Mss.Afr.s.141.ff366-7

<sup>128</sup> A. McClintock, *Imperial leather: Race, gender, and sexuality in the colonial context* (New York, 1995); as opposed to a conscious sexualization of those belonging to the *terra incognita*; Hyam, *Empire and sexuality: The British experience* (Manchester, 1990)

<sup>129</sup> E. Jane, 'Construction of new line to Kassala 1928, SAD 2/4/7; A. C. Parker, 'Plaque marking the official opening of the Kassala-Gedaref-Sennar railway', [1929], SAD 17/3/60

<sup>130</sup> Parker, 'Construction work on the quays at Port Sudan', [c.1920-1932], SAD 17/3/22-3. This had an established precedent; for example, see E. S. Crispin, 'Making temporary quays', [1905-6], SAD 2/25/9

<sup>131</sup> J. W. Crowfoot, 'The dam, Makwar', [February 1924], SAD 8/5/1

<sup>132</sup> N. R. Syme, 'Canal digging in Gezira', [1935], SAD 2/7/22-3

<sup>133</sup> Parker, 'Abu Deleig bridge', [January 1928], SAD 17/3/17-8

African himself, they believed that they were making their own jobs easier at the same time as they were making 'better' the lives of those they ruled over.

If stability could be maintained at the same time as conditions were gradually improved, the colonial official could have his cake and eat it; he could both avoid retrograde social steps being taken whilst making his lot a more pleasant one. But these changes do not validate modern claims made by scholars such as William Beinart as to tension between the romantic old African world and the new British-inhabited one.<sup>134</sup> There was no inconsistency. After all, very few revelled in Africa as it was felt to have existed in the pre-colonial period, although they did not reject it out of hand. Daniell in the Sudan, for instance, felt that before the British had come African life had been hard, and that it was for the best that this was no longer the case.<sup>135</sup> He was part of a more general trend. Pre-colonial Africa, colonial officials felt, had been cruel and unsympathetic. Here, avid readers of Speke, Richard Burton and Samuel Baker such as Gawain Bell in the Sudan took in tales of 'primitive' lands as evidence that these were harsh terrains in need of improvement.<sup>136</sup> The reputation of nineteenth-century West Africa as the 'White Man's Grave' graphically demonstrates this in particular; as the mortality rates of Europeans living in Africa dropped, so the continent was judged to have become 'better', with each innovation welcomed as an improvement on what there had been before.<sup>137</sup>

Of the Anglo-Indian official between 1880 and 1930, Benita Parry has written that despite 'instances of self-criticism, the overwhelming tendency of Anglo-Indians was to believe absolutely in their own excellence and in that of their society's codes and customs'.<sup>138</sup> Much the same was the case in Africa. The British colonial official engaged heavily with the ideas of the metropole, both before and during his time in Africa. His views were similar to the

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<sup>134</sup> Beinart, 'Empire, hunting and ecological change', p.178

<sup>135</sup> For one of many examples, see Daniell, diaries, 29 August 1938, SAD 777/13/26

<sup>136</sup> For one of many examples, see Bell to parents, 26 January 1932, SAD 697/5/47; Bell, diaries, [undated], SAD 698/8/3; R. F. Burton, *First footsteps in East Africa* (1856; London, 1910); J. H. Speke, *Journey of the discovery of the source of the Nile* (Edinburgh, 1863); see also E. G. Ravenstein, 'Life of Samuel Baker - A review', in *Geographical journal* 6 (1895), pp.73-5

<sup>137</sup> P. D. Curtin, 'The end of the "White man's grave"? Nineteenth-century mortality in West Africa', in *Journal of interdisciplinary history* 21 (1990), pp.63-88

<sup>138</sup> B. Parry, *Delusions and discoveries: India in the British imagination, 1880-1930* (1972; London, 1998), p.58

editorials and books that he read. He was more enthusiastic about change than some scholars have made out, and he felt that British actions were part of a coherent strategy borne out of a faith in the validity of the 'civilizing mission'. Most officials were not opposed to the introduction of urban spaces and trade – the supposedly 'darker' sides of the West – to Africa. It is to the way that officials' perceptions of race, Africa and imperial strength combined to create certain approaches to development that we must now turn.

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## The Africa of the colonial official (2): Development

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In April 1931 an administrator, Alan Wilkinson, gave a speech to chiefs at Akropong in the Gold Coast. Africa was, for Wilkinson, entering a

time of great change... Communications, motor roads, telephone. The spread of education. Changes of the same sort are going on all over the world... These changes are seen most in Africa on the coast, in contact with Europe. They are now spreading inland. Change is not bad, but desirable... But there is much good in some of the old customs, and it is desirable to conserve this and to combine it into the new... What gives power is knowledge. The spread of knowledge is a very good thing.

Wilkinson then went on to state how confident he was that 'change' and 'stasis' could be combined in a coherent manner, and that any potential threat to social stability posed by change could be checked if due care was taken.<sup>1</sup> To what extent were such public proclamations indicative of deeper-held sentiments, and to what degree did officials say such things because they felt duty-bound to? In other words, do officials' personal writings – their diaries and letters home – reveal the same sort of confidence in the applicability of such plans for managed change in Africa? After all, Wilkinson's speech was delivered at a

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<sup>1</sup> A. L. Wilkinson, 'Notes for speech at Akropong on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1931', RHO Mss.Afr.s.713/129-30

meeting that was attempting to calm conflict between the people of Asakrangwa and the Tufuhene, or local leader, of the Akropong area.<sup>2</sup> Thus Wilkinson's conciliatory tone, his attempt to elucidate on the necessity of an interweaving of change and stasis, and his confidence that such an interweaving was possible,<sup>3</sup> might have been borne out of pressing concerns for social stability rather than out of any belief in the truth of the statement.

Such pressing concerns for the maintenance of stability have led some to argue that British officials in Africa were extremely reluctant for the continent to be changed.<sup>4</sup> One of the most persistent of these arguments is that British officials were averse to widening the scope of educational provision in colonial Africa, and only did so as a means of providing just enough educated Africans to allow for the running of the empire on the cheap. This theory emerged among a minority in the interwar period,<sup>5</sup> and was voiced more vocally throughout the era of decolonization,<sup>6</sup> informing neo-Marxist analyses of the 'seventies and other more recent scholarly works.<sup>7</sup>

Claims to tension at the heart of the imperial mission in Africa mirror those that some allege were deep-rooted in the metropole. For instance, Neil Parsons claims that the Bechuanaland Protectorate starkly exemplified the tension between a 'mercenary tradition' that combined an ethos of law and order with capitalist interests, and a 'missionary tradition' that emphasised imperial trusteeship in protecting and advancing indigenous interests. For Parsons, this is exemplary of 'the contradiction between imperial protestations of trusteeship and colonial practices of exploitation [that] was inherent in colonialism everywhere.'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.713/134

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.713/130

<sup>4</sup> For example, Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, pp.139-40

<sup>5</sup> L. Barnes, *The duty of empire* (London, 1932), passim; Leys, *The colour bar in East Africa* (London, 1941), passim

<sup>6</sup> O. Ikejiani, 'Education for efficiency', in *Nigerian education*, Ikejiani (ed.), (London, 1964), p.86; see also F. Fanon, *Wretched of the earth*, C. Farrington (trans.), (1961; London, 2001), passim

<sup>7</sup> C. Whitehead, 'The historiography of British imperial education policy, Part II: Africa and the rest of the colonial empire', in *History of education* 34 (2005), p.447; S. J. Ball, 'Imperialism, social control and the colonial curriculum', in *Journal of curriculum studies* 15 (1983), pp.237-63

<sup>8</sup> N. Parsons, 'Colonel Rey and the colonial rulers of Botswana: Mercenary and missionary traditions in administration, 1884-1955', in *Peoples and empires in African history: Essays in memory of Michael Crowder*, J. F. Ade Ajayi and J. D. Y. Peel (eds.), (London, 1992), pp.200-1

Deborah Kaspin reiterates Bhabha's arguments with regards to the specific matter of Europeans in Africa when she says that civilizing 'the savage' was an aim, but one that was 'fraught with ambiguities', for the westernized African was, to the British, 'both their best ambition and their worst nightmare... [because such westernization] meant that colonialism had succeeded and that European pre-eminence was over.'<sup>9</sup>

In assessing such claims, and as was suggested with respect to the 'town' and 'bush' D.C.s in chapter four, it cannot be assumed that a unified mindset existed across the whole of the colonial service. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the beliefs of five different colonial officials of varying character, interests and experiences. Angus Duncan-Johnstone was a hard-working, serious Gold Coast official who preferred working in towns over rural areas. Edward Lumley, who served in Tanganyika, was, on the other hand, less thoughtful and more violent than Duncan-Johnstone, and was instead driven by impulse, with little sense of an overarching method to his actions. Different to both of these men was Arthur Sheffield, who worked in Nigeria, but who loved urban life and was a party-goer, one of a newer generation that revelled in gossip and other social concerns. By way of contrast, John Edward Griffiths, a D.C. who served in Tanganyika, did not have such an easy relationship with his fellow countrymen. He frequently shunned socializing with other officials in favour of a life 'alone' among the Africans. And lastly, as a means of assessing just how far metropolitan beliefs reached all types of official, ex-army figures who went on to work in the civilian government services must also be taken into account. An experience of the hardship of wartime conflict might have led to a more sceptical, 'hard-nosed' approach to governance and uncertainty as to the lasting nature of any peacetime social stability. Here, W. S. Gerard Barnes, a military man who stayed on in Tanganyika after the Great War, will be discussed.

Colonial officials also had a variety of intellectual preoccupations. Some were most interested in what geography could reveal about Africa, others in anthropology, while others believed above all else in harnessing modern scientific methods to the changing of Africa. However, this chapter will suggest that an adherence to paradigmatic conceptions of policy

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<sup>9</sup> D. D. Kaspin, 'Conclusion: Signifying power in Africa', in *Images and empires: Visuality in colonial and postcolonial Africa*, P. S. Landau and Kaspin (eds.), (Berkeley, CA, 2002), pp.327-8

in Africa transcended social backgrounds and attitudes and intellectual preoccupations. In each of the different colonial officials examined in this chapter, racial ideas combined with a faith in a certain type of development to create a similar mindset. On the contrary to both those who stress a British willingness for stasis and those who emphasise ambiguity, the main planks of thought that conjoined to inform metropolitan ideas of development – race, a sense of Britain’s ‘mission’ in the world and, underpinned by both of these, perceptions of Africa – also shaped officials’ ideas about their role in the continent.

These engendered a belief that a sustained and extensive European imperial intervention would not harm Africa. Thus, the interwar colonial official demonstrated the same stability of mindset as metropolitan commentators; while there may have been contradictions at the heart of the British Empire, this does not mean that these were apparent to colonial officials in interwar Africa. Such was the strength of the predominant metropolitan ways of thinking that different personal preoccupations added only nuance to these overarching conceptions. A Lugardian sense of an internally coherent mixture of change and ratification of the ‘status quo’ informed colonial officials just as much as it did governmental elites.

And, finally, there is more evidence of intellectual links between colonial officials and the British metropole when one turns to ideas about the political future of the continent. Officials shared in the belief that the British would be in Africa for a long time, a sense that was not undermined by British experiences of indigenous nationalist activity. Nationalism was not necessarily assumed to be anti-colonial; where it was, because imperial confidence ran so high, it was felt that once Africans had come to appreciate the benefits of imperialism, such protest would subside.

Angus Duncan-Johnstone, a Scotsman, had served as a colonial official in various parts of the Gold Coast since 1913, rising to become Commissioner of the Southern Province in 1929.<sup>10</sup> He revelled in town social life when stationed in places such as Cape Coast, and favoured ‘educated and progressive’ chiefs over those of a ‘bush’ mentality, to whom Duncan-Johnstone ascribed negative characteristics such as a tendency to be inward-looking

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<sup>10</sup> He was also briefly acting Chief Commissioner in the Northern Territories, from December 1929 to January 1930, and from June to October 1932.

and a reluctance to embrace new governmental and agricultural approaches.<sup>11</sup> This is unsurprising, given that Duncan-Johnstone made no attempt to hide his preference for town over 'the bush'; from his 'personal experience' he knew how 'one's brain atrophies in the arid north and living in solitude or in small communities for too long certainly warps one's mentality.'<sup>12</sup> Duncan-Johnstone was under no doubt as to the value of progress, which he clearly identified with urbanism.<sup>13</sup> In 1924, he noted that it was 'a fine sight to see the stream of cars entering and leaving Kumawu'; such developments facilitated the ability of the British to change the continent further, given that 'the road is having a very settling effect on local politics. The young men are now too busy making money'.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, when there was a lack of available funds for road maintenance, Duncan-Johnstone's diary entries took a disheartened tone.<sup>15</sup> Such disheartenment was, however, only temporary; the man prided himself on the ability of the colonial official to come up with a coherent plan of action in the face of adversity.<sup>16</sup> He retained a great deal of affection for those products of the system that he felt he had helped to create, taking what seems a genuine pleasure on meeting young educated men from the Northern Territories of the country who were 'getting on in the world'.<sup>17</sup>

Duncan-Johnstone was frustrated at how slowly things were progressing in the north of the country in comparison to the south. Nevertheless, when stationed in Tamale in 1930 Duncan-Johnstone was sufficiently attached to the establishment of indirect rule there that he put in an official request to extend his stay to oversee such an introduction.<sup>18</sup> Later on in his time in the Gold Coast when working elsewhere, he requested an extension so that his successor was

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<sup>11</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 11 September 1928, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)I(6)/11; Duncan-Johnstone, 'Annual report for 1918: Lorha', RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/1/4, 30

<sup>12</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 9 September 1928, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)I(6)/7

<sup>13</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 22 February 1923, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)I(1)/42

<sup>14</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 25 January 1924, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)I(1)/126

<sup>15</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 27 April 1923, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)I(1)/55

<sup>16</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 27 March 1928, 593(1)I(3)/32; Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 27 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(3)2/23-4; Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 16 May 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(3)3/49; Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 6 August 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)I(7)/5

<sup>17</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 9 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(3)/1/16

<sup>18</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 22 March 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.593(1)I(9)/18; see also Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 17 December 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.593(1)I(7)/65



briefed on those passing difficulties that had arisen during the implementation of developmental policies.<sup>19</sup>

He retained a very positive outlook. Only two months after the Great Crash, Duncan-Johnstone could state that he felt 'very optimistic about the future of this country, from the point of view of Native Administration and its development agriculturally and commercially.'<sup>20</sup> But, whatever the lasting impact of the Crash in West Africa,<sup>21</sup> throughout the early 'thirties Duncan-Johnstone had high hopes for the future economic stability of the country because he believed that there was a very good chance that a banana industry would develop over time.<sup>22</sup> '[W]ith its productive soil and virile people', he wrote in his diary, the Gold Coast 'has great possibilities'.<sup>23</sup>

A memorandum exists that was written by Duncan-Johnstone in 1930 or thereabouts and looks very much like an attempt to collect all thoughts on development in one place. In it he argued that everyone

whatever his opinion may be in regard to direct rule or indirect rule, will agree, I think, that it is our duty to do everything in our power to develop the native along lines which will not westernise him and turn him into a bad imitation of a European – our whole educational policy is directed to that end.<sup>24</sup>

And yet, change was necessary, for 'nothing ever stands still if [sic] it did that would mean stagnation which is tantamount to being dead.'<sup>25</sup> To this end, Duncan-Johnstone endorsed indirect rule because it supported the idea that 'every system of Government if it is to be

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<sup>19</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 4 October 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.593(3)/3/80

<sup>20</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 31 December 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.593(1)I(7)/78

<sup>21</sup> Which is tackled at various points in I. Brown (ed.), *The economies of Africa and Asia in the inter-war depression* (London, 1989)

<sup>22</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 13 November 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(2)/9/2; see also Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 17 August 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(2)/8/19

<sup>23</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 22 March 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.593(1)I(9)/18; see also Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 31 August 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.593(1)I(13)/20

<sup>24</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, 'Memorandum on the introduction into and the development of Native Administration in the Southern Province' [c.1930], RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/6/1

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/6/5

permanent and progressive must have its roots in the framework of indigenous society'.<sup>26</sup> During his time in the Gold Coast he was an avid reader of Lugard's work; he was keen to learn about the ways that indirect rule was being implemented in other parts of Africa, and gave lectures on the policy and Native Administration at refresher courses for teachers.<sup>27</sup> His desire to keep up with the latest research was in tune with his wish to receive updates on goings-on in the wider world, although his attempts to listen to British radio programmes on his wireless were sometimes frustrated by bad signals caused by atmospherics.<sup>28</sup>

Duncan-Johnstone believed that the localised autonomy given via indirect rule would lead to a gradual amalgamation of each little tribal 'state', whereby the Gold Coast would eventually emerge as something resembling the political geography of Britain. The

little languages will die out and there will be one or two main languages, with intermarriage, education and the intercourse made possible by modern transport conditions, the tribal jealousies [sic] and differences will gradually disappear and the little states will come together and form one or two big kingdoms.<sup>29</sup>

This belief is closely linked to the ideas of Westermann that were outlined in chapter three. This is unsurprising, given that Duncan-Johnstone was a keen advocate of Westermann's work, and the official aided the anthropologist, sending him details of the peoples living in Kumase.<sup>30</sup> Duncan-Johnstone also kept in touch with what others, such as colonial-official-turned-anthropologist R. Sutherland Rattray, were up to, meeting them when they came to the Gold Coast on research trips.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 30 January 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(2)/3/35; Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 14 July 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(2)/7/29; Duncan-Johnstone, 'Memorandum on the introduction', RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/6/5

<sup>28</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 24 June 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(2)/7/23

<sup>29</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 21 January 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)/7/87; see also Duncan-Johnstone, 'Memorandum on the introduction', RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/6/9-10

<sup>30</sup> Westermann to Duncan-Johnstone, [1928], RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/4/1

<sup>31</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, diaries, 26 March 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(1)/9/21

As for the effects of change, for Duncan-Johnstone Africans could, by acquiring 'character' through a constant repetition of 'sound habits', avoid 'damage' consequent on rapid change causing a 'kind of mental indigestion'.<sup>32</sup> This is key to an understanding of Duncan-Johnstone's perception of the ability of the British to effect internally-coherent development in Africa. In keeping with his serious, somewhat puritanical tone, he felt it was incumbent upon Africans to modify their temperaments - to come to respect order, temperance, and reliability - but not their social structures. Indirect rule was thus advocated because it changed the 'content' but not the 'packaging'.<sup>33</sup>

Despite only having started work in Tanganyika in 1923, in temperament Edward Lumley was one of the old guard. He spoke the language of an earlier age; an Edwardian tongue that placed greater emphasis upon notions of honour and duty than his post-1918 peers. He was blunt, and does not seem to have ruminated on the general path that the British were headed in the same overarching manner as Duncan-Johnstone.<sup>34</sup> The method Lumley employed as an official was a mixture of violence and friendship. As A.D.C. in Korogwe in 1934 he met one 'particularly ill-dressed native wearing a very dirty cap' that was not lifted when Lumley addressed him, so the Briton boxed the African's ears, which caused some awkwardness when the assaulted turned out to be the priest from the local mission.<sup>35</sup> This sat alongside Lumley's belief that any tax evasion on the part of the African was a

disease caused by neglect on the part of the Administration. The Administrative Officer is looked on as a Tax gatherer, when he should be considered as a friend, who makes the paying of tax easy by showing his people the path to prosperity.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Duncan-Johnstone, 'Address by A. Duncan-Johnstone, Deputy Commissioner, Eastern Province, Ashanti, at the laying of the foundation stone of Edward Prempeh's house at Menhyia the 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1925', RHO Mss.Afr.s.593(4)/3/34-5

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Lumley, *Forgotten mandate*, pp.14-20

<sup>35</sup> Lumley, diaries, 12 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/8; see also Lumley, *Forgotten mandate*, p.64

<sup>36</sup> Lumley, diaries, 21 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/14-5

How could such seemingly opposing sentiments, an inclination towards both violence and friendship, be squared with each other? And what were the ramifications of this for the chances of a stable conception of development emerging?

Lumley certainly appeared genuine in his desire for change to be effected. So much so that he was prepared to run up against the central authorities and exceed his brief. In Arusha in 1935 he pushed for a water scheme, whereby local people would collectively fund new pumping equipment. According to him at least, they had agreed to this in various meetings he had held with them. Hignell, the Provincial Commissioner, criticised the plan for its circumvention of official channels and Lumley's offer of resignation was accepted.<sup>37</sup> Using Lumley as the sole source of information on this event means a firm conclusion as to whether all of this really happened exactly as he described is impossible. But Lumley would not have been the only administrator to offer his resignation when he did not get the funds for a development plan.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, there were plenty of other officials who criticised their superiors for not doing enough to improve the lot of the African.<sup>39</sup> For a self-labelled man of action, Lumley's method of operating had a seriously detrimental effect. He was put on Revenue Officer duty until his leave, after which he was given work in the Legal Department, which he hated,<sup>40</sup> only finally going back on tour when he went to Lindi as D. O. in the summer of 1937.<sup>41</sup>

A desire for independence of action certainly accounted in part for this apparent irregularity of conduct. It is no coincidence that the Provincial Commissioners who Lumley liked most were the ones that allowed the man on the spot an 'independence of thought'.<sup>42</sup> It was a combination of Lumley's belief that he knew the African better than the central authorities and his paternalistic concern that generated this stance and led to his run-in with

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<sup>37</sup> Lumley, diaries, 13 to 29 October 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/107-11

<sup>38</sup> Robertson to mother, 14 February 1932, SAD 531/3/23

<sup>39</sup> Titherington to 'Dorothy', 27 March 1936, SAD 636/12/33; see also Titherington to 'Dorothy', 4 July 1935, SAD 636/12/31; G. E. R. Sandars, memoirs, SAD 815/14/17; D. J. Parkinson, diaries, 15 October 1938, RHO Mss.Afr.s.835/13; W. B. Tripe, 'Anger in Africa', RHO Mss.Afr.s.868(4)/23

<sup>40</sup> Lumley, diaries, 20 October 1936, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/114

<sup>41</sup> Lumley, diaries, 19 July 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/115

<sup>42</sup> Lumley, diaries, 11 April 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/60

the authorities. The Africans of Korogwe were identified as 'his',<sup>43</sup> and while in Arusha on what was believed at first to be a temporary basis, Lumley was anxious to return to his previous post and the people who he knew.<sup>44</sup>

For further evidence as to this paternalistic element, during a private talk with a forestry man in Amani, the two men agreed that

it is scandalous that so much land should be owned by European Planters who have no intention of developing it... It is an unhappy state of affairs that natives should be compelled to pay rent for the privilege of cultivating land in their own country.<sup>45</sup>

And again, at Lindi in 1937, there were 'one or 2 [Planters'] Estates which are really good to their labour and look carefully after them. The majority mainly regard the blackman [sic] as a machine to be driven. They seem to have no humanity of outlook at all.'<sup>46</sup> It was his 'duty to protect the rights of the native inhabitants'.<sup>47</sup> It would be pushing any historians' claims of self-aggrandising pity towards the African on the part of Lumley beyond a reasonable level of cynicism to argue this desire was not genuine. His evident distress at famine and poverty in Kwata shows as much.<sup>48</sup>

With all of this considered it can be seen how Lumley would have justified an occasional outburst of violence against Africans such as the boxing of a priest's ears. He would have done so on the grounds that the maintenance of discipline was necessary; as he put it, Africans 'need, and really they welcome, firm administration' to prevent their sinking into a

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<sup>43</sup> Lumley, diaries, 2 May 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/66-7; Lumley, diaries, 2 November 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/112

<sup>44</sup> Lumley, diaries, 20 June 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/84; Lumley, diaries, 22 June 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/84

<sup>45</sup> Lumley, diaries, 20 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/13-4

<sup>46</sup> Lumley, diaries, 25 October 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/131

<sup>47</sup> Lumley, diaries, 14 October 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/107

<sup>48</sup> Lumley, diaries, 21 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/14

‘hopeless lethargy’ in which they would ‘make no progress at all.’<sup>49</sup> For Lumley the British had to occasionally be cruel to be kind if any progress were to be made.

This progress would come courtesy of indirect rule. The prestige and authority of local rulers was to be upheld as a priority.<sup>50</sup> This conception of indirect rule took place, again, from a stance that was pro-active in certain ways. The one ‘big blot on the Barabaig character’, for example, was a bloodthirsty nature; however, this could be ‘wiped out by intense administration of the tribe’.<sup>51</sup> Lumley certainly fitted into the stereotype of the official seeking what he, rather than what the African, conceived of as ‘traditional’. This was not a problem for him. After all, in time this ‘corrected’ version of tradition would replace such societal aberrations, effecting a stable synthesis of the old and the new. Despite believing that chiefs had been an ‘alien fungus’ for the Barabaig, he pressed on for their full-scale establishment as local leaders. Though he noted in his diaries that the latest of these chiefs was the sixth or so in four years, the previous ones having been deposed for incompetence, the problem of a high turnover was seen by him as an indictment of these past chiefs, rather than of the potential for the applicability of the chief system to the Barabaig *per se*.<sup>52</sup>

In a different situation, things altered slightly. When Lumley moved to Lindi in 1937, he believed the people there were detribalised, and the use of ‘Native Mohamedan Magistrates’ was felt to be the ‘only practical form of Government’. Even so, he still made it clear that this was an exception whereby the coastal belt was a special case.<sup>53</sup> Evidently in a ‘tribal’ setting the maintenance of authority could not be conceived of other than via the system of chiefs.

Arthur Sheffield was an Agricultural Officer in Nigeria from 1930 onwards, having been trained at the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad in the late ‘twenties. In stark contrast to the gruff manner of Lumley, Sheffield was a self-styled cad, delighting in

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<sup>49</sup> Lumley, diaries, 17 July 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/30

<sup>50</sup> Lumley, diaries, 14 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/17

<sup>51</sup> Lumley, diaries, 7 June 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/78-9

<sup>52</sup> Lumley, diaries, 28 May 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/75

<sup>53</sup> Lumley, diaries, 29 October 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.785/132

parties with other 'bright young people' and what he felt to be luxurious living.<sup>54</sup> He was a gossip and much amused by 'shocking' new things that he felt might annoy an older generation, such as 'society' plays and 'liberal' attitudes towards sexuality.<sup>55</sup>

While in Trinidad, Sheffield wrote home to his mother complaining that a recent cricket match had been dull, a situation made worse by the fact that half of the opposing team was coloured.<sup>56</sup> 'Nigger' was used freely in his writing, alongside other typical terms as 'Chink'.<sup>57</sup> And yet, he endorsed a collection of three 'very able' articles about Nigeria by Margery Perham and published by *The Times* in December 1932, saying to his mother that if she 'has missed them, I shall be thoroughly disgusted with you, as you ought to digest them'.<sup>58</sup> In these articles, from which it is worth quoting at length, Perham noted that the

advance since Lord Lugard first marched up to these walled cities [in Northern Nigeria, which included Sokoto, where Sheffield was first posted] 30 years ago has been remarkable. As a result of his system, almost of their own momentum, the bigger native Administrations have taken over one by one the activities of government... it is a striking tribute to the tact and devotion of the Residents that they have built up the present relations of harmony and confidence with an aristocracy so far removed from them in religion, ideals, and way of life... [old systems of government] passing away... need not be regretted when we remember that the preservation of native law and custom is not an end in itself, but a transitional stage by means of which Africans may become members of the civilized world.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> A. F. Sheffield to father, 14 March 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/14; Sheffield to mother, 13 November 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/43; Sheffield to mother, 11 December 1930, RHO Mss.Bri.Emp.s.310/79

<sup>55</sup> Sheffield to mother, 26 February 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/7

<sup>56</sup> Sheffield to mother, 3 February 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/3

<sup>57</sup> Sheffield to mother, 26 February 1927, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/9

<sup>58</sup> Sheffield to mother, 1 February 1933, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/108

<sup>59</sup> Perham, 'Nigeria to-day: I. - Progress of native rule', in *The Times*, 28 December 1932, p.11; Perham, 'Nigeria to-day: II. - Rule of the emirs', in *The Times*, 29 December 1932, p.9; Perham, 'Nigeria to-day: III. - The central provinces', in *The Times*, 30 December 1932, p.11

This is not all, however. Sheffield was sure in his own mind as to what he liked of Africa and what he did not. He deemed the 'well organised' native administrations of Nigeria the best means of ruling people, but hated the Africans from the "'trouserred" classes', such as a newspaper reporter who he had met and later described as a 'revolting gentleman in European clothes + a felt hat'.<sup>60</sup> And yet this did not mean that he opposed learning in those rulers who he felt were 'naturally' African. The headman of Idowa, a Mr. Dagburewe, was deemed 'a fine, natural African gentleman, with none of that dreadful "educated" touch about him. [He s]peaks English well + writes it, can talk off on any subject, obliging, courtly and intelligent... really 100%'.<sup>61</sup> When Sheffield attacked the 'educated', therefore, he had a very specific form of educated in mind. As was usually the case, his attack was aimed at those felt to have gone too far in renouncing indigenous cultural forms; their taking on board a host of 'western' skills was not in itself an issue.

This is unsurprising for two reasons. First, he was constantly encountering this sort of idea, this sort of distinction between 'education for education's sake' and 'education along racial lines' in his reading. He was an avid reader of *The Times*,<sup>62</sup> which contained various articles along these sorts of lines throughout 1932, the year in which the comments noted above were made.<sup>63</sup> This was also in keeping with the tone of *Blackwood's Magazine*, Sheffield's other main source of reading material. This resolutely High Tory magazine was an outlet for these same sorts of ideas, publishing articles by John Buchan among others.<sup>64</sup> Second, Sheffield evidently enjoyed the trappings of Western civilization. During his first days in Africa he was concerned as to what he would have to put up with when he got to Sokoto.<sup>65</sup> This was not helped by his stopping off at Abeokuta, which he felt was 'very dull... just acres of bush

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<sup>60</sup> Sheffield to mother, 1 February 1933, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/109

<sup>61</sup> Sheffield to mother, 19 December 1932, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/105

<sup>62</sup> Sheffield to mother, 8 February 1932, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/88

<sup>63</sup> For example, 'Education in East Africa: The new outlook', in *The Times*, 30 March 1932, p.9

<sup>64</sup> D. Finkelstein, *The house of Blackwood: Author-publisher relations in the Victorian era* (University Park, Penn., 2002), p.12

<sup>65</sup> Sheffield to mother, 11 December 1930, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/78; see also Sheffield to mother, 17 January 1929, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/70-1; Sheffield to mother, 31 December 1930, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/84



+ oil palm, with clearings for cocoa + cassava etc.’.<sup>66</sup> These fears were allayed when he arrived at Sokoto; it was ‘not such a bad hole’, because it had tennis courts, a golf course, a polo ground, and soccer and fives pitches. For Sheffield, consequently, what the British could bring with them to the continent was exciting, and the passing of an old Africa was not to be mourned.<sup>67</sup> A metropole-influenced advocacy of indirect rule would sort out those aspects of pre-colonial Africa that were deemed worth saving.

It is now necessary to tackle the nature of social relations, and whether ambivalence or opposition to British social life engendered ambivalence or opposition to British metropolitan ideas of development. The fourth of the five examples here is that of John Edward Griffiths. While on tour in Tanganyika in 1931, Griffiths wrote in his safari notes that ‘[f]unnily enough although I have travelled for 3 days without so much as seeing a white man I was not very thrilled to see Herr R[aymann]. Heaven knows what I’ll be like when I do return to civilization’.<sup>68</sup> The following day, he felt that he ‘would just as soon be alone than with other Europeans... In some ways [it is] very pleasant – chatting etc [sic] but being alone is very pleasant’.<sup>69</sup> For Griffiths there was a ‘mental strain’ involved in talking to other D.O.s.<sup>70</sup> And yet, a few months later, while out on trek again, he would write ‘[o]n a perfect evening like this one regrets that one has to enjoy it alone’.<sup>71</sup> However, that Griffiths was not always keen on socialising with other Europeans should not lead to an assumption that he opposed an ‘urbanised Africa’ over a ‘rural Africa’. After all, he enjoyed home comforts,<sup>72</sup> and was a fan of Dar es Salaam.<sup>73</sup>

More significantly, ambiguity in terms of personal relationships did not impinge upon the manner in which Griffiths envisaged development. He remained wedded to western notions of change. Ruminating on the future of Tanganyika and the relationship between differing

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<sup>66</sup> Sheffield to mother, 21 December 1930, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/81

<sup>67</sup> Sheffield to mother, 31 December 1930, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/85; see also Sheffield to mother, 1 March 1931, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.310/93-4

<sup>68</sup> J. E. Griffiths, diaries, 23 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/30

<sup>69</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 24 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/30

<sup>70</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 25 January 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.r.179/13

<sup>71</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 19 January 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/5

<sup>72</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 24 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/30

<sup>73</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 2 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/1; see also Griffiths, diaries, 4 October 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/42

ethnic peoples, Griffiths believed that, while he preferred the South African 'natives' to those in the East, British officials living in Africa were better than the Boers he had encountered. One of the reasons for this was that he felt the latter had gone too far in their plans for segregation. He believed the best way to run the area would be to have Africans live in a certain area of land, but not to have a Colour Bar. He postulated that the British should eventually 'let the natives in the reserves run themselves under white tutelage – let them have their own councils + make their own laws for themselves: this would give all the political freedom they wanted'. Thus, white 'tutelage' was a means of effecting reform to social structures that were to nevertheless remain intact. The British would 'probably have to put their foot down pretty hard here + there until they learnt how to do things', and that while at that time they 'probably... could not run themselves', white supervision would mean that 'within the next 100 years or so they would be able to do everything for themselves.'<sup>74</sup> And, similar to some of those already discussed, he was exasperated if his work was not appreciated. 'It seems darn funny', he ruminated, that Africans were usually relatively lazy, for 'we are supposed to be running this country for the benefit of the native + we worry... about making them pay tax when they should do the worrying, as it is for their benefit.'<sup>75</sup> Whilst wanting reserves and geographic, if not economic, segregation, Griffiths nonetheless remained wedded to the ideal of indigenous social systems partially developed in accordance with a universalist moral code as a means of facilitating cultural and social regionalism. In this attitude he was the same as those with whom he did not socialise.

Making such cases, however, we run the risk of ignoring those who stayed on as colonial officials upon the completion of military duty. Many ex-military officials who had seen action in Tanganyika during the Great War were recruited by Sir Horace Byatt to administer that country in peacetime.<sup>76</sup> An examination of such officials offers a chance to test the degree to which metropolitan ideas really permeated all types of colonial official, because

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<sup>74</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 3 October 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.180/39-40

<sup>75</sup> Griffiths, diaries, 4 October 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.180/41

<sup>76</sup> Iliffe, *Tanganyika*, p.264

there are various reasons, some unique to Tanganyika, for why ex-military men would have been the most likely to reject any stable confidently-held plans for reform.

Firstly, the experiences of Tanganyika during the First World War could conceivably have played a part in constructing a particular approach to the country in peacetime. Those who participated in the campaign to capture Tanganyika endured harsh circumstances during their manoeuvres. Conditions for marching were often poor, alternating between sun and heat and torrential rain and mud, which made access to rations difficult. There were whispered tales of a lawless Masai, seemingly mad and looting at whim, while the effects of malaria were worsened by a lack of available quinine. Morale among troops was therefore low.<sup>77</sup> It is undoubtedly true that memory plays a part in perceptions of the present and, as will be suggested later, unhappiness played a role in making some ambivalent. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to expect ex-military officials in Tanganyika to be more uncertain as to British strength and policy than those who had had no direct experience of combat, especially those who had arrived in Africa after 1918 fresh-faced from university.

Secondly, if ex-military officials perceived themselves as new to a system of governance that was in itself only in its formative stages, they may have viewed the British hold over Tanganyika as tenuous. It is therefore valid to question whether a military role imparted to some a heightened sense that they were on the edge, part of a 'thin white line'<sup>78</sup> in a situation where things could descend into conflict and instability at any moment. There is, after all, a case to be made that in the early 'twenties Africans in other British colonial territories were beginning to feel more stable. Tom McCaskie's fascinating study of Asante identities shows how early colonial Kumase possessed a 'somewhat chaotic and incoherent' character, which was engendered by its long urban history being overwritten by experiences of being

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<sup>77</sup> Francis J. Bagshawe, diaries, 26 March 1916, RHO Mss.Afr.s.279/12; Bagshawe, diaries, 27 March 1916, RHO Mss.Afr.s.279/14; Bagshawe, diaries, 4 April 1916, RHO Mss.Afr.s.279/19; Bagshawe, diaries, 6 April 1916, RHO Mss.Afr.s.279/21; Bagshawe, diaries, 24 April 1916, RHO Mss.Afr.s.279/35; Bagshawe, diaries, 25 April 1916, RHO Mss.Afr.s.279/36. However, not all indigenous peoples were deemed to be undermining British efforts; W. S. Gerard Barnes, Intelligence report, 29 August 1917; RHO Mss.Afr.s.458/91. Of course, Africans serving in the war had a hard time of things too; Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, (Oxford, 2004), p.7

<sup>78</sup> The phrase is Kirk-Greene's; Kirk-Greene, 'The thin white line: The size of the British colonial service in Africa', in *African Affairs* 79 (1980), pp.25-44

governed by non-Asante people for the first time. Therefore, a sense of instability was borne out of an experience of both 'seductive familiarity and threatening novelty'.<sup>79</sup> However, from around the mid 'twenties onwards, McCaskie argues, Africans became more confident in their handling of a city 'more settled, more routinised and more predictable' than before.<sup>80</sup> Conceivably, this could have fed into British conceptions of stability, because it provided them with what may have been interpreted as evidence that the African could reconcile the indigenous with the alien. Tied to this, between the turn of the century and the early 'twenties colonial officials in Nigeria and elsewhere increasingly felt that the lands they administered were 'under British control', which usually engendered a move from a reluctance to change anything for fear that to do so might rupture the social fabric, towards a greater sense of flexibility of action.<sup>81</sup> Conversely, if a feeling of routinisation and control was missing from the lives of those Africans living in Tanganyika, this may have served to exacerbate ex-military officials' own sense of instability.

Some were a little more reluctant to enter into this sort of activity in Tanganyika. W. S. Gerard Barnes was a military man who stayed on in Tanganyika after the First World War. In 1919, he wrote in his safari diary that the boundary between the territory of two headmen was nearby to him somewhere but, given that he heard of 'no trouble between the two... I resolved to allow matters to stand as they are, and not attempt any boundary markings.'<sup>82</sup> Such reluctance is in sharp contrast to the contemporaneous activities of British boundary markers elsewhere in Africa.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, Barnes believed that the men of the Wamatambwe were 'depraved' because they had taken seven and eight year-old girls as wives but when 'remonstrated with the men were surprised that I should take exception to the practice', claiming it is a 'recognised custom'. So, 'under the circumstances' Barnes made no arrests. However, even then a belief

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<sup>79</sup> T. C. McCaskie, *Asante identities: History and modernity in an African village 1850-1950* (Edinburgh, 2000), p.144

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.144, see also pp.147-8, 189-90

<sup>81</sup> M. Mason, 'The history of Mr. Johnson: Progress and protest in Northern Nigeria, 1900-1921', in *Canadian journal of African studies* 27 (1993), p.208

<sup>82</sup> Barnes, diaries, 24-28 May 1919, RHO Mss.Afr.s.459

<sup>83</sup> For instance, see C. Lentz, 'Colonial constructions and African initiatives: The history of ethnicity in Northwestern Ghana', in *Ethnos* 65 (2000), pp.112-7

in moral universalism was not absent; he warned them that the practice must 'immediately cease' with 'a very severe punishment' for future offenders.<sup>84</sup>

Nevertheless, as Barnes felt that the British were starting to control the country more firmly, he became more pro-active in advocating change. For example, in November 1921 he reported on tribal organisation in Kahama, advocating change where necessary in a vigorous manner, and in accordance with the principles of indirect rule. While the Sultans of the east of the region were deemed responsible and dignified, and were therefore to remain in power, in the west they were 'depraved + vicious individuals, little above the animals in intelligence + instinct', and to be removed and replaced by 'two educated and trustworthy people (Arabs for preference)' as part of a 'ventilation of the lawlessness of the Western area'.<sup>85</sup> He returned to this latter area a couple of months later accompanied by the Assistant Inspector of Police and 26 men to remind the 'natives... that the Government are [sic] not to be defied with impunity'.<sup>86</sup> This is certainly not to say that all military officers were of such a mindset but that it would appear to be the case that those military men who were inclined to stay in Tanganyika after World War One were of a similar mindset to their civilian peers. Ex-military men maintained a similar attitude to the majority of their contemporaries when it came to a willingness to reconfigure African societal systems if this was deemed likely to make an improvement.

Colonial officials did not only differ in social attitudes. Different administrators placed emphasis upon different parts of their work. For some, the application of science and technology was the best means of altering the African and his landscape. Others were more concerned with understanding Africans' social behaviour, and applied anthropological techniques they had gleaned from their training to their everyday administrative work. The need to examine those most interested in anthropological study is particularly important, for it has been argued that the discipline engendered an ambivalent relationship towards

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<sup>84</sup> Barnes, diaries, November-December 1919, RHO Mss.Afr.s.459

<sup>85</sup> Barnes, 'Safari report: Abolition of various small Wasumbwa sultanates and creation of Akidats', November 1921, RHO Mss.Afr.s.460

<sup>86</sup> Barnes, 'Special tour...', January-February 1922, RHO Mss.Afr.s.460

'progress' and 'change' in Africa among those colonial officials who were interested in it.<sup>87</sup>

But, much as has been demonstrated with regard to metropolitan anthropological commentators, those from the administrative services who undertook their own amateur anthropological studies did not depart from the ideas of those already examined. Different intellectual preoccupations merely added nuance to prominent ideas about African development.

There was a good deal of interest in anthropology among British colonial officials. Many were aware of the works and ideas of relatively popular writers such as Perham and Huxley, as well as Bronislaw Malinowski and Rattray.<sup>88</sup> This acquaintance with anthropological ideas is understandable; James Frazer's *The golden bough* and Malinowski's concepts were course essentials during officials' probationary training.<sup>89</sup> Many were taught by those who were deemed at the cutting edge of ethnographic research. For example, George Bredin, who went on to work as an administrative official in the Sudan, was among the many who were taught ethnology by the pre-eminent anthropologist Professor Charles Seligman.<sup>90</sup> This generated an interest in the topic among some. As well as keeping and evidently priding himself on his small library of works that tackled current affairs in Egypt, the Middle East, and further afield, S.P.S. official Ian Bruce-Gardyne was also interested in anthropology. This stemmed from his time at Balliol in 1919 prior to his leaving for the Sudan the following year.<sup>91</sup> Others took this interest further, contributing to the anthropological discussions going on within the different administrations by writing articles for publications such as *Sudan notes and records*.

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<sup>87</sup> W. Beinart, 'Empire, hunting and ecological change in Southern and Central Africa', in *Past and present* 128 (1990), p.178

<sup>88</sup> For example, see Dowsett, letter to mother, 22 May 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1276/63; Bell to 'Gedant', 12 February 1933, SAD 697/9/36; M. W. Young, *Malinowski: Odyssey of an anthropologist, 1884-1920* (London, 2004); T. H. von Laue, 'Anthropology and power: R. S. Rattray among the Ashanti', in *African affairs* 75 (1976), pp.33-54. With regards to the artist Richard Wyndham's ethnographic work *The gentle savage*, which talks of the Bahr-el-Ghazal in the Sudan, see J. G. S. MacPhail to mother, 13 August 1936, SAD 764/7/16; R. Wyndham, *The gentle savage* (1936; London, 1937)

<sup>89</sup> Percival, 'Tropical African Services Course 1929/30: Syllabus, exam papers, lecture notes', RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.364/passim

<sup>90</sup> G. R. F. Bredin, memoirs, SAD 815/12/2

<sup>91</sup> I. M. Bruce-Gardyne, booklist, SAD handlist; biographical detail at <http://history.prm.ox.ac.uk/students.php?all>, viewed on 13 December 2006

For instance, another S.P.S. official, E. H. Macintosh, wrote about the Dago people after having spent four years as A.D.C. in Nyala in Darfur.<sup>92</sup>

When Neil Weir was training for the colonial service, he undertook a course in ethnology under Seligman at the Imperial Institute in South Kensington.<sup>93</sup> He took to the subject immediately, and this is reflected in the content of his diaries and official reports that he produced during his time in both Nigeria and Sierra Leone. While most reports of the period contained at least an introductory preamble about ethnographic knowledge of different peoples, Weir made a sustained effort to understand the key social characteristics of the peoples living in his given administrative regions.<sup>94</sup>

Seligman was an anthropologist who viewed himself as a compiler of facts rather than a theoriser, and his writings are thus missing political commentary.<sup>95</sup> He did not, therefore, provoke uncertainties about the 'civilizing mission' among those whom he taught. Consequently, it is unsurprising that Weir's evaluations of those he ruled, be they positive or negative, were largely determined by the degree of change such people were felt willing to entertain. Weir believed that the majority of those he lived amongst in the Obubra Division in Eastern Nigeria in the late 'twenties justified the nickname 'East-End of Nigeria', given that they are 'extremely ignorant and backward and in many places practice their old customs'.<sup>96</sup> This contributed to his extreme unhappiness while in the district and, on his leaving Obubra, led him to state flatly that 'I hope I never see it again.'<sup>97</sup> By contrast, Weir admired the Ekiti who inhabited the Ondo district. He believed that the majority of this 'mild, gentle and likeable people', who lived under a British rule that ensured 'peaceful progression', were

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<sup>92</sup> E. H. Macintosh, 'Note on the Dago tribe', in *Sudan notes and records* 14 (1931), pp.171-7

<sup>93</sup> N. Weir, diaries, undated [1925], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(1)/1-2

<sup>94</sup> Weir, diaries, undated [1927], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(1)/47; Weir, 'Ogoja Province, Abakaliki Division annual report, 1931', 7 January 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(4)/48-63

<sup>95</sup> M. J. Herskovits, 'Charles Gabriel Seligman', in *American anthropologist* 43 (1941), p.438; see also C. G. Seligman, 'The characteristics and distribution of the human race: An introduction to ethnology', in *An outline of modern knowledge*, W. Rose (ed.), (London, 1931), pp.431-84, especially pp.464-74

<sup>96</sup> Weir, diaries, undated, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(1)/42

<sup>97</sup> Weir, diaries, undated, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(1)/56

extremely anxious to progress and are quite capable of expressing their wishes or views on matters which affect their communal life. It would be wrong to assume that because the people are so definitely agricultural they are more or less incapable of taking any interest beyond their village or rural area. They do not ask for startling changes but rather that their natural rulers should keep abreast with modern ideas and tendencies.<sup>98</sup>

These 'modern' ideas could be introduced safe from any fear that they would undermine stability, because while these Africans desired change, they wanted the hard graft of understanding the complexities of a more modern political existence to be undertaken by the chief. Given that the African masses had a 'natural' respect for authority, all that was required to ensure modernizing elements were introduced into the societal status quo smoothly was for the situation to be controlled by the British to ensure that no 'unscrupulous or grasping' ruler took charge of the area.<sup>99</sup> That 'improvements' could be made to Africa in a relatively short time was confirmed for Weir when he later returned to places he had been stationed previously.<sup>100</sup>

Where the people were more 'primitive', Weir felt it would be necessary to introduce more rudimentary measures first. For example, with regards to one of the districts within the Ogoja Province of Nigeria, that a Central Native Administration ran things was deemed by Weir to be sufficient until 'backward clans' had gone through a 'period of initiation into the art of self-government'. Once enough responsible notables were found, however, a Central Federated Council could be established. Despite the fact that Weir believed no such council would be 'strictly in accordance with tradition... the close kinship of the clans involved would be ample justification for the formation of one... [for] their mutual benefit and

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<sup>98</sup> Weir, 'The broad outlines of the past and present organisation in the Ekiti division of the Ondo province with suggestions for administrative and judicial reform', 13 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(6)/388, 390, 403

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(6)/388, 390, 429

<sup>100</sup> Weir, diaries, undated [1930], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(1)/67; Weir, diaries, undated [1935], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(1)/101



progress'.<sup>101</sup> Weir was thus prepared to step outside of the usual remit suggested to him by his understanding of indirect rule if it meant that progress could be effected. He was nevertheless, predominantly, a firm adherent to the policy. Writing from Sierra Leone, where he moved in 1937, he believed that one could learn much from Donald Cameron's *The principles of native administration and their application*, adapting it to suit local custom where appropriate but applying it, more or less, to the situation around him.<sup>102</sup>

Weir found Sierra Leone very different to Nigeria. In his handing over notes for the Kailahun District, written in April 1938, Weir argued that Sierra Leone as a whole was less advanced than other British-held territories in Africa by approximately twenty years. This was 'largely due to the antiquated form of local government that has persisted to the present day'; what was required was for administrative staff to 'coax' local chiefs to accept a system of governance 'which is not designed to benefit his own pocket, or hold the lower classes in suppression'.<sup>103</sup> In the more 'primitive' areas, this was to be done by pushing forward with indirect rule, whether or not such a development was welcomed initially. Again with regards to Ogoja, since the majority of people (much to the evident annoyance of Weir) were 'exceedingly conservative' with 'no love for education', by establishing a Native Administration school the spark of interest in learning extant among the minority would fan across the remainder of the populace.<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, Humphrey Amherst, Acting D. C. in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, was interested in the writings of Rattray.<sup>105</sup> Although Rattray was widely disliked as a person in the Gold Coast for the way in which he was felt to have 'gone native', his opinions on the Ashanti were highly regarded.<sup>106</sup> Rattray's eccentric social habits did not cause such a divergence of opinion between himself and his peers as some have argued. The most important point in his *Religion and art in Ashanti* (1927) was directed towards the Akan

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<sup>101</sup> Weir, 'Ogoja Province annual report 1931', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(4)/56-7

<sup>102</sup> Weir, 'Native administration notes: Sierra Leone', 25 April 1938, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(7)/3

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(7)/2; see also Weir, diaries, undated [1937-8], RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(2)/15

<sup>104</sup> Weir, 'Ogoja Province annual report 1931', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1151(4)/62-3, 88

<sup>105</sup> H. W. Amherst, diaries, 26 August 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/32

<sup>106</sup> A. F. Robertson, 'Anthropologists and government in Ghana', in *African affairs* 74 (1975), p.54

peoples, who were to 'guard the national soul of your race and never be tempted to despise your past', but his aim was to give them a 'helping hand to assist them over this critical stage in their evolution',<sup>107</sup> an evolution that he welcomed.<sup>108</sup> Rather than this being indicative of a tension between colonial interests and the interests of the Ashanti, as A. F. Robertson would have it, this was similar in tone to Lugard et al, as was Rattray's dichotomization of a static African 'tradition' and modern European modes of governance.<sup>109</sup> After all, it is difficult to see how the work could have been allowed to become required reading for colonial officials if it was felt by the administrative elite to compromise the integrity or stated aims of the British ruling elites in Africa.<sup>110</sup>

So, unsurprisingly, despite Amherst's keen interest in different peoples – again, similar to Weir he frequently noted down the different social characteristics he believed summed up whole 'racial' groups<sup>111</sup> – his approach to Africa was similar to that of his peers. For instance, Amherst noted that one group of Africans who wished to relocate closer to a road should be encouraged, since their movement would mean more land would be cultivated, and that 'these wild people... [would be] brought into contact with civilisation'.<sup>112</sup> Amherst's desire for a reconfiguration of certain aspects of the communities extended into the cultural arena; he was keen on the idea of the theatre being established as a professional venture for Africans.<sup>113</sup> He described peoples in differing ways depending on the degree to which he felt they were willing to learn. He noted rather exasperatedly that some are 'like the horse that can be led to water... [and yet] will not make use of the conveniences with which a paternal Government supplies them',<sup>114</sup> while those, such as the Lobis, who kept their farms clean and

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<sup>107</sup> R. S. Rattray, *Religion and art in Ashanti* (London, 1927), preface and p.12, quoted in Robertson, 'Anthropologists and government', p.55

<sup>108</sup> Rattray, 'Anthropology and Christian missions: Their mutual bearing on the problems of colonial administration', in *Africa* 1 (1928), passim

<sup>109</sup> Robertson, 'Anthropologists and government', p.55

<sup>110</sup> For one instance of the metropolitan commentator that Rattray's knowledge would enable the British to further advance the welfare of the Ashanti, see M. Fortes, 'Review of *The tribes of Ashanti* by Capt. R. S. Rattray', in *Journal of the Royal African Society* 32 (1933), pp.87-93

<sup>111</sup> For instance, Amherst, diaries, 21 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/157

<sup>112</sup> Amherst, diaries, 12 August 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/25; see also Amherst, diaries, 2 September 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/35

<sup>113</sup> Amherst, diaries, 6 August 1938, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/286

<sup>114</sup> Amherst, diaries, 2 September 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/35

diverted waterways for agricultural purposes, '[t]hough conservative in some respects, are certainly neither lazy nor stupid'.<sup>115</sup> Amherst relayed his frustration at the difficulties he felt he had in getting some of those he governed to learn. He noted how hard it had been to get parents to send their children to be educated at the Tamale Trade School, as these parents believed that their offspring would be unable to secure employment upon leaving education.<sup>116</sup> He constantly expressed his delight when Africans he came into contact with were felt to be making efforts to learn English and the '3 Rs'.<sup>117</sup> Amherst's relationship with Africans was governed to a large extent by an evaluation of their receptiveness to change.

When, in his role as D. C. of Dagomba, he encountered two youths with growing local influence in Nambiri voicing resentment at an increase in taxation, Amherst commented that he was 'very interested to hear this, as it indicates that the "Revolt of Youth" exists even in Konkomba'.<sup>118</sup> Despite the fact that these youths were often critical of the British government, he wrote that 'the movement, rightly directed could be of great social value', and 'should certainly be attended to', as an encouragement of 'youthful exuberance' would counteract 'the doddering section of the community'.<sup>119</sup> This is certainly not the rhetoric of a man committed to 'preserving' Africa in accordance with a perceived ancient past.

And yet, Amherst clearly believed that there were well-defined limits to the extent to which Western societal systems should influence the nature of African life. One chief's manner of dispensing justice, arriving at truth in a 'very efficacious, quick, fair and dignified' manner made the 'long-winded' English system 'seem more ridiculous than ever when dealing with these people'.<sup>120</sup> This, however, was not uncertainty or ambiguity as to the applicability of the imperial enterprise to Africa. Instead, in such instances African methods were seen as the

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<sup>115</sup> Amherst, diaries, 21 July 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/222-3

<sup>116</sup> Amherst, diaries, 10 September 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/38; see also Acland, 'Handing over notes, Central District, Kassala Province', 7 November 1931, SAD 777/14/18

<sup>117</sup> Amherst, diaries, 26 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/160; Amherst, diaries, 14 August 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/150; Amherst, diaries, 2 November 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.1207/153; Amherst, diaries, 12 January 1938, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/259; see also H. M. Brice-Smith, 'Katagun quarterly report No.21 for quarter ending 30th, June, 1915', July 1915, RHO Mss.Afr.s.230; L. S. Waterall, 'Annual report: Mikindani sub-district 1922', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1047(4)/425

<sup>118</sup> Amherst, diaries, 16 June 1939, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/307

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Amherst, diaries, 6 May 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1207/64-5

best way of ensuring the values that the English prized highly were upheld. Furthermore, the self-assured confidence that saturates Amherst's pronouncements regarding the ability of the British to make a mark upon Africa is indicative of exactly the buoyant tone delineated in the first half of the present study.

This link between colony and metropole is compounded when we see how officials' conceptions of their role and of the British as a whole shifted in line with what was going on in the metropole. New language, new 'buzzwords', accompanied this partial change in the way the best means of effecting change was envisaged. An increased advocacy of science and technology, when grounded in a 'rational' British ability to moderate any plan for progress, combined with a long-extant universalistic sense of moral order to create a renewed vigour at the heart of post-1918 imperial actions. Susan Martin has shown how the colonial officials in Nigeria in the 'twenties followed the trend of elite officials and metropolitan administrators in their enthusiasm for a strengthening of the relationship between science and technology and empire. Provided the economics allowed it, neither was this a pipe dream. A. C. Barnes, for example, wrote to the government chemist in Nigeria in 1923 asking that non-mechanical palm processing presses be introduced to more parts of the country, a task his colleagues had already commenced. The resulting presses were initially too expensive, but enthusiasm for them grew after 1929, with 58 of them in Nigeria by the end of 1932, rising to 390 by 1936.<sup>121</sup>

Some were interested in both making geographical and ethnographic observations, and advocating scientifically-informed development. The diaries of one Tanganyika official, Geoffrey Popplewell, reveal a constant interest in anthropology. He frequently remarked on the social habits of peoples with whom he came into contact, and tried to understand why these had come into being.<sup>122</sup> In 1931 the geography committee of the British Association, led by the pre-eminent human geographer Professor Alan Ogilvie from the University of Edinburgh, asked for colonial officials to provide information about the peoples in

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<sup>121</sup> S. M. Martin, *Palm oil and protest: An economic history of the Ngwa region, south-eastern Nigeria, 1800-1980* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.64-5

<sup>122</sup> Popplewell, diaries, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1980(4)/passim

Tanganyika.<sup>123</sup> Because the matter interested him, Popplewell completed a report on the Tunduru District, which was the basis for an article published in the *Geographical journal* in 1938.<sup>124</sup> It was here that he revealed his interest in science as a motor for social reform. 'The present methods of land utilization', he remarked

impose a continuous movement on the population which, as the natural resources become increasingly exhausted in the course of time, will have a disastrous effect on native welfare. The most effective means of arresting this movement lies in the introduction of a more scientific form of agriculture. The task would be worth the effort, for once the population were stabilized and assured of an adequate food supply, an imminent danger would be removed and at the same time an opportunity provided for a gradual improvement in the commerce, society, and culture of the native.<sup>125</sup>

Other factors, such as the practice of polygamy, were also felt to have contributed to the issue, but these were felt to be of 'secondary importance and might easily be removed by legislation', namely the furtherance of indirect rule across the region.<sup>126</sup>

Similarly, the same sorts of thought processes present in the interwar metropole concerning the future of the empire in Africa exist in the writings of colonial officials. Some were reluctant to comment on what the future of British rule in Africa might hold, such as C. A. E. Lea, Peter Acland and Robin Baily in the Sudan.<sup>127</sup> However, others such as Michael Hoyle, who worked in Nigeria, envisaged that African countries would eventually form part of a 'Commonwealth of nations', in keeping with the ideas expressed by Amery and others.<sup>128</sup> The overall tone of ideas as to the future were in keeping with those of Lugard and the rest,

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<sup>123</sup> On Professor Ogilvie, see 'Obituary: Alan Grant Ogilvie', in *Geographical review* 44 (1954), pp.442-4

<sup>124</sup> Popplewell and Marcus, 'Notes on the geography of the Tunduru District', pp.31-43

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.43; Popplewell, 'Random recollections', RHO Mss.Afr.s.2156/13-4

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Lea to parents, 14 February 1927, SAD 645/7/40; P. Acland, Memoirs, SAD 707/15/9

<sup>128</sup> M.V. Hoyle to mother, 11 October 1925, RHO Mss.Afr.s.718(1)

that the British were to remain in Africa for a long time. For example, one D.C. in the Gold Coast, L. G. Dixon, wrote that 'the British Empire is only now beginning to realise itself', and that no one 'should enter the Colonial Service thinking that he will live to see the results of his handiwork.'<sup>129</sup>

A sense that the British had a lot of time left to act in the continent was compounded by British conceptions of African nationalisms. Many nationalists did not initially present themselves as being counter to British aims. Surveyor and journalist Herbert Macaulay of Lagos, who established Nigeria's first political party, the Nigerian National Democratic Party, in 1923, was one of the most strident nationalists of the time, and yet he submerged 'nationalist rhetoric within an impeccably British framework of liberalism, constitutionalism and strong sentimental loyalty to the throne.'<sup>130</sup> Similarly, the newly educated young men in the Gold Coast were avid readers of 'solidly nineteenth-century, European and non-modernist' works such as Conan Doyle and Dickens.<sup>131</sup> This accounts for the gradualist stance taken by Gold Coast nationalist Nnamdi Azikiwe.<sup>132</sup> While there was a change in the tone of most African nationalist rhetoric at the end of the 'thirties,<sup>133</sup> an interwar British lack of perception of indigenous opposition to imperial aims is therefore unsurprising.

Contrastingly, where nationalists *did* position themselves as explicitly anti-imperialist, such as the members of the White Flag League in 1924, colonial officials did not feel that all who joined in with insurrections were genuine in their opposition to Britain. As one official would later say about the Sudanese soldiers involved in the mutiny of 1924, the 'poor devils had been led down the garden path as a result of Egyptian propaganda and didn't rightly know what was going on.' Remove the Egyptians, which happened soon after the mutiny had been suppressed, and you remove opposition to British rule, or so the reasoning went.<sup>134</sup> After all,

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<sup>129</sup> Dixon, 'Life and duties', RHO Mss.Afr.s.356/1-2

<sup>130</sup> I. Duffield, 'John Eldred Taylor and West African opposition to Indirect Rule in Nigeria', in *African affairs* 70 (1971), pp.252-68, quote at p.253

<sup>131</sup> Newell, *Literary culture in colonial Ghana*, pp.18-9, 22, 44

<sup>132</sup> J. E. Flint, 'Managing nationalism: The Colonial Office and Nnamdi Azikiwe, 1932-43', in *The statecraft of British imperialism: Essays in honour of Wm. Roger Louis*, R. D. King and R. W. Wilson (eds.), (London, 1999), pp.143-58

<sup>133</sup> Iliffe, *Africans*, p.233

<sup>134</sup> Macintosh, memoirs, SAD 895/3/5

in the Sudan, the most prominent and popular nationalist figures, such as Sayyid Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi and Sayyid 'Ali al-Mirghani allied themselves publicly with the British whilst expounding a highly gradualist move towards self-government, which prevented the White Flag League from coming even close to monopolizing nationalist sentiment.<sup>135</sup> In this light, the majority would cause no trouble for the British, which fed into a sense that the British had matters under control.

Furthermore, while it is unlikely that all British officials in Africa shared the opinions of some in the Colonial Office that the main aim of educated Africans at this time was to attain a greater degree of economic and social strength, rather than a greater degree of self-government,<sup>136</sup> some felt that educated Africans could be kept happy if they were in gainful employment that they did not feel to be beneath them. In 1931, C. A. Willis wrote to a colleague in the Upper Nile Province of the Sudan that the present situation did 'not indicate any immediate fear of creating an "Intelligenza" [sic], with no means of employment'.<sup>137</sup> This is indicative of a wider failure on the part of British officials to fully appreciate the extent to which certain Africans' mentalities had been altered under colonialism and a partially-Westernised education. Writing in his private notebook in the early 'thirties in Southern Rhodesia, Thompson Samkange, who would later become President of the Bantu Congress, noted that the Europeans had 'changed our world... He has aroused in us the

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<sup>135</sup> A. A. M. Abu Hasabu, *Factional conflict in the Sudanese nationalist movement 1918-1948* (Khartoum, 1985), pp.4, 25, 36-7; H. A. Ibrahim, 'The role of Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mahdi in the Sudanese national movement 1908-1956', in *The nationalist movement in the Sudan*, M. A. H. Al Safi (ed.), (Khartoum, 1989), pp.174-6; P. M. Holt, 'Sudanese nationalism and self-determination, part I', in *Middle East Journal* 10 (1956), p.241; H. Abdin, *Early Sudanese nationalism 1919-1925* (Khartoum, 1985), p.19; M. A. Rahim, *Imperialism and nationalism in the Sudan: A study in constitutional and political development 1899-1956* (1969; Khartoum, 1986), pp.99-100; another factor that accounted for this lack of strength of the League was that in the Sudan protest was limited, confined to some of the employees of Sudan Railways, Port Sudan's harbour and a small number of ginning factories; T. Niblock, *Class and power in the Sudan: The dynamics of Sudanese politics, 1898-1985* (London, 1987), p.108; G. S. Schoettler, 'The genial barons', in *The British in the Sudan, 1898-1956*, R. O. Collins and F. Deng (eds.), (London, 1984), pp.105-6; Abdin, *Early Sudanese nationalism*, pp.65-72. Compare this with N. J. Brown, *Peasant politics in modern Egypt: The struggle against the state* (New Haven, 1990), pp.195-6

<sup>136</sup> With regards to educated West Africans, see the Colonial Office comments in 'Cultural relations between Britain and African dependencies: Memorandum by Miss Margery Perham', CO 847/12/8; see also Wraith, *Guggisberg*, pp.162, 192

<sup>137</sup> C. A. Willis, 'Handing over notes: Upper Nile Province', [1931], SAD 212/13/8

stirring of divine discontent... [Yet] it is amazing how little the white man really knows of the stirring of new life in native peoples living in his midst.'<sup>138</sup> Ian Phimister has stated that, in the case of Southern Rhodesia, when confronted with... [nationalist] stirrings of popular discontent and consciousness, the state fumbled for an appropriate response'.<sup>139</sup> However, because the matter was not then viewed as something needing a priority response, any failings were at the recognition stage, rather than at the policy implementation stage, contrary to what Phimister seems to imply.

At any rate, and once again in line with metropolitan ideas, the majority view was that nationalist wishes in Africa could be effectively curtailed by the correct implementation of indirect rule. For those who perceived the existence of a racial ceiling to the extent to which Africans could become self-sufficient, nationalism was not a problem, for any indigenous national self awareness could never lead to a severing of ties between Britain and Africa. For others, the introduction of new social, economic and political ideas to Africa would create an initial disturbance, a 'transitional period'. Once the British had fully introduced indirect rule and the program for reform was complete, the argument went, the continent would enter an age where the guiding precept of the 'paramountcy of the native' ensured the African did not want for anything. Thus contented, nationalism would be confined to a ratification of a national identity, rather than any secessionist impulse.<sup>140</sup> Therefore, the interwar British largely failed to appreciate both the impact that they had had and were continuing to have in generating African nationalist sentiment, and the lasting implications of such an impact.

Given the extent and manner of British colonial officials' intellectual interactions with the ideas of the metropole, it is unsurprising that the former espoused the views of the latter. The colonial services were made up of civilians and ex-military men, socialites and non-socialites, of men fascinated by the potential power that science and technology, or anthropology and geography, or both, bequeathed to them. That such disparate individuals

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<sup>138</sup> Quoted in T. Ranger, *Are we not also men?: The Samkange family and African politics in Zimbabwe 1920-64* (1995), p.15

<sup>139</sup> I. Phimister, *An economic and social history of Zimbabwe 1890-1948: Capital accumulation and class struggle* (Harlow, 1988), p.148

<sup>140</sup> Haarar, 'Memories', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1144/14



shared the same sorts of ideas as to how Africa was to be altered is testament to the influence of the metropole. It was metropolitan ideas about race and imperial power that intersected in the minds of officials to generate imperial confidence.

It has been argued here that this sense of power and confidence among colonial officials was genuine. This might seem a rather laboured point, but it is an important one, because certain scholars have argued that a post-1918 crisis about the validity of the 'civilizing mission' led British officials to retreat into an imaginary world whereby a fictitious African past was conjured up.<sup>141</sup> By contrast, according to the present author's point of view, discrepancies between perceptions of Africans and an African reality were a result of ignorance of the nuances of African life rather than any desire to disengage from Africa. Such a disengagement was not in British interests.

An emphasis upon a confidence that was inspired by both a sense of racial superiority and a wider general perception of British power does not mean that colonial officials did not get frustrated with what they could and could not do. Writing in his diary, one official in Tanganyika noted exasperatedly that it was 'really very little use giving orders to Africans unless one sees that they are carried out, but in East Africa, it seems, either one gives no orders at all, or else gives them and looks the other way.'<sup>142</sup> Similarly, it is not contested that there were elements of Western society, such as cinema, that the British felt should be presented to the African with extreme care.<sup>143</sup> However, colonial officials felt that they could undertake such careful handlings; problems could be surmounted. An 'initial phase of large-scale violence', mainly prior to World War One, 'slipped into a routine of localized coercion', whereby 'administrators believed that they had established an accommodation with tradition that would be stable and enduring'.<sup>144</sup> The British saw no major cracks in their plans.

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<sup>141</sup> C. S. L. Chachage, 'British rule and African civilization in Tanganyika', in *Journal of historical sociology* 1 (1988), pp.199-223

<sup>142</sup> Oates, diaries, [1932], RHO Mss.Afr.6039/18

<sup>143</sup> T. Burke, "'Our mosquitoes are not so big": Images and modernity in Zimbabwe', in *Images and empire*, p.43

<sup>144</sup> Willis, 'Violence, authority, and the state in the Nuba Mountains of Condominium Sudan', in *The Historical Journal* 46 (2003), p.92

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## Outsider officials: The ambivalent minority

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Despite a general coherence of thought among the British as to the manner in which Africa was to be altered, there were some colonial officials, albeit a distinct minority, who were ambivalent as to the nature of Britain's relationship with Africa. The social profile of these administrators is easy to determine. They were usually younger men who commenced official duties later on in the interwar period. Many of them affiliated themselves intellectually with the modernist commentators of the day. However, there were others who did not, and it is therefore more accurate to say that those who displayed signs of ambiguity as to the validity of the 'civilizing mission' were those who perceived of themselves as being different to the majority. They were self-positioned outsiders. And yet, despite all of this, some of them nevertheless endorsed certain ideas of the majority.

Leonard Heaney studied at Oriel at the end of the 'twenties, and drank in the irreverent undercurrent of the college at the time. This was when the college was the home of the famously oppositional A. J. P. Taylor and self-described 'liberal socialist' James Meade, later an economic adviser to the Labour Party, as well as a number of aesthetes, who formed part of a well-known minority who used to frequent the nearby St. George's café and restaurant.<sup>1</sup> Heaney was an outsider, and cut a marginal figure among his cadet contemporaries – he was picked on and taunted by his peers who accompanied him on the voyage out to Tanganyika,

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, *A personal history* (London, 1983), pp.74-5; A. Sisman, *A. J. P. Taylor: A biography* (London, 1994), p.57; K. Burk, *Troublemaker: The life and history of A. J. P. Taylor* (New Haven, 2000), pp.49, 63

for example – which was only compounded by his ‘childlike’ appearance and his perceived naivety in the ways of romancing women.<sup>2</sup>

At the age of twenty three, the precocious Heaney found himself in Mahenge in Tanganyika with his much-loved jazz records and the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, signing off letters home with flourishes such as ‘Yours the Mephistophelean’.<sup>3</sup> Well-read and dwelling on matters with a constant view to the ‘bigger picture’, Heaney certainly seems to fit in with a theory put forward by one young would-be administrator, who while training in Balliol College, Oxford, believed that, for one reason or other, all of the cleverest ones on his course were those going out to Tanganyika.<sup>4</sup>

Heaney frequently elaborated eloquently on his lot in life and the encounter between Africa and the West in his letters home. His relationship with the output and consequences of modern civilization fluctuated significantly during his time in the mandated territory. Sometimes, Heaney would take great delight in emphatically endorsing Western, and more specifically English, things. He loved the formal social life, the company of Europeans in an environment where Africans appeared ‘obscurely, as servants and underlings’, and delighted in a hotel’s ‘chromium plate and shining glass’ during a visit to Nairobi in 1937,<sup>5</sup> while noting that a camp at Limandola that Cameron had visited once in 1926 was ‘absurdly luxurious. This evening I wandered among the deserted wood and thatched huts, and delighted at this gay flourish in the face of the primeval.’<sup>6</sup> ‘Living out here’, he wrote in Dar es Salaam one day when homesick after playing hockey with some members of the Navy, ‘makes me appreciate all those solid, earthy, English things’.<sup>7</sup> He frequently missed home comforts,<sup>8</sup> complaining on one occasion that life in Tanganyika was

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<sup>2</sup> Tripe to parents, 30 July 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.868, File 1/78

<sup>3</sup> L. M. Heaney to parents, 19 October 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/5; Heaney to parents, 27 April 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/22

<sup>4</sup> Tripe to parents, 7 May 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.868, File 1/50

<sup>5</sup> Heaney to mother, 19 June 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/97; Heaney to mother, 25 June 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/98

<sup>6</sup> Heaney to parents, 19 October 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/4; see also Heaney to J. Fisher, 11 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/32

<sup>7</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, 25 August 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/48

<sup>8</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, 25 January 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/40

merely an unending struggle to reap a sufficiency of food in the face of floods, drought and the depredations of elephants, baboons and locusts. The constant struggle leaves little time for the pursuit of intellectual excellence or anything which does not give immediate satisfaction to material needs.<sup>9</sup>

This sense became even greater when faced with locusts properly for the first time, which made him 'marvel about the complicated and invisible machinery in a modern state which distributes the goods and makes a famine an unthinkable disaster.'<sup>10</sup>

And yet, on another occasion, he would declare

I am fundamentally a "wide open spacer" and while I take pleasure for a while in the electric light, the ice and indoor sanitation of Dar es Salaam, I long for the smell of wood smoke and the blue silence of the bush.<sup>11</sup>

Such opinions were repeated throughout his time there, sometimes taking the form of highly romanticised visions, conceptions of an Africa ringing out to the 'soft clang of cowbells', and a 'life Biblical in its simplicity, which in its essentials has not changed for centuries.'<sup>12</sup> In this frame of mind, Africa was 'romantic'.<sup>13</sup> Or, in a different vein, while in Africa, it is 'difficult to keep up... an interest in the softer, kindlier sides of life. So much of African life is harsh and strong, very thrilling but requiring firmness, not vague, friendly consideration'. For Heaney, the 'exciting primitive life' that had a touch of the magical and the secret really did exist.<sup>14</sup>

These ideas contrast sharply to those stated elsewhere. In a letter home, he noted that a photograph he had sent on 'denies you the odour, which is the quintessence of Africa, that mysterious something which, my magazine tells me, will always lure me back from England,

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<sup>9</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, undated [March 1935], RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/79

<sup>10</sup> Heaney to parents, 28 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/58

<sup>11</sup> Heaney to Fisher, 19 March 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/41

<sup>12</sup> Heaney to mother, undated [April 1937], RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/96; see also Heaney to Heaney family, 30 November 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/36

<sup>13</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, 5 May 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/44

<sup>14</sup> Heaney to parents, 13 October 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/2; Heaney to Fisher, 28 June 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/47

Home + Beauty!’<sup>15</sup> Heaney was bound up in an unending cycle of rejection and endorsement; entering a built-up area after a period away he celebrated the urban, only to hanker after a romanticised rural ideal as this ‘civility’ became routinised, and so on.

For him, what the British were doing in Africa was confused and rather farcical. ‘[A]t home’, he wrote to his parents

it seemed that the work would largely consist in [sic] saying “come” and “go” to natives with no questions asked. But that is a thing of the past. We are at the beck and call of numberless Departments, the Audit, the Treasury, the Secretariat, and the Public Works, each thinking that our sole delight is in answering their particular correspondence. So, expert as they are in their jobs, they invent ingeniously complicated systems to insure [sic] that there will be no leakage.

In the middle of all of this irreconciled tension, the official on the ground was supposed to keep everything together.<sup>16</sup>

But even then, the colonial official’s own position in Africa was uncomfortable for Heaney.<sup>1</sup> The African, if left alone by the British, would sit in the shade and start ‘gossiping with his neighbours... Probably, if we are to believe D. H. Lawrence he “looks into the heart of the cosmos” and has “the oldest kind of wisdom”’. This would be disrupted by the colonial official, who would come along, telling the African to fill in the holes in the road and carry his tent for him ‘over twelve miles a day for fifty miles, so that [t]he bwana can quickly reach another office and start his occupation of signing his name on many pieces of paper.’<sup>17</sup> The references to the ‘heart of the cosmos’ comes from D. H. Lawrence’s *The plumed serpent*, in which a sentimental primitivism is a constant thread.<sup>18</sup> The reference to the ‘oldest wisdom’, that there are truths in the ‘primitive’ world that have been ignored by modern man, is

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<sup>15</sup> Heaney to parents, 4 May 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/25

<sup>16</sup> Heaney to parents, 13 October 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/1

<sup>17</sup> Heaney to Fisher, 18 April 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/20

<sup>18</sup> Neilson, ‘D. H. Lawrence’s ‘Dark Page’’, *passim*

central to the ideas in Lawrence's *Fantasia of the unconscious and psychoanalysis and the unconscious* which, as Anne Fernald has pointed out, tackles alienation and frustration with modernity and which ties in with Birkin's statement in *Women in love*: 'I abhor humanity, I wish it was swept away'.<sup>19</sup> Such claims as to Lawrence's frustration with the modern world and ambivalence with regards society and its manners – Linda Ruth Williams has called *Fantasia of the unconscious* a 'highly systematized but certifiable schizo-rant'<sup>20</sup> seem valid, but what is important here is that Heaney, perceived himself as following Lawrence, who very few critically engaged with at the time, in displaying at the very least ambivalence about civilization and, at most, calls for parts of it to be dismantled.

Besides helping to demonstrate how certain officials endorsed the writings of particular writers, and in this case, how an official who was unrepresentative of his peers sought out and endorsed literature that was unrepresentative of fiction as enjoyed by a majority, this might make us think he only saw value in the 'untouched' native. And yet, while noting that the new type of 'educated' African made officials' work more difficult because they refused to stand and take off their caps when a European approached, 'I suppose it is right that they should not'.<sup>21</sup> The African dandy remained a constant source of fascination for him,<sup>22</sup> an 'impressive figure', who at times he admired,<sup>23</sup> and at times resented being around when he could be seeing the 'more primitive natives'.<sup>24</sup> This coming from a man who thought highly of the Germans for having 'opened up' Tanganyika to development in the face of 'suspicious and hostile' Africans.<sup>25</sup>

In keeping with this confusion and his shifting relationship with the 'primitive' and the 'modern', Heaney's opinions about the 'more primitive' Africans under his charge often

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<sup>19</sup> A. E. Fernald, "'Out of it": Alienation and coercion in D. H. Lawrence', in *Modern Fiction Studies* 49 (2003), p.188; D. H. Lawrence, *Women in love*, D. Farmer, L. Vasey and J. Worthen (ed.), (Cambridge, 2002), p.127

<sup>20</sup> L. R. Williams, *Sex in the head: Visions of femininity and film in D. H. Lawrence* (Detroit, 1993), p.12, quoted in Fernald, "'Out of it'", p.184

<sup>21</sup> Heaney to parents, 8 April 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/19; see also Heaney to parents, 28 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/62

<sup>22</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, 28 November 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/53

<sup>23</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, 30 November 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/35

<sup>24</sup> Heaney to Heaney family, 5 May 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/44

<sup>25</sup> Heaney to Fisher, 28 June 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/45

changed. For example, when writing of those who he believed had failed to take heed of his anti-locust advice, he 'lash[ed] himself into a fury over this... it really does seem a little 'ard after all the anxiety I have felt on their behalf' while, a little over two weeks later, he was claiming he would have no objection at all to leaving Africans to their perceived idleness-induced fate 'were I not under some pressure to see that tax comes in, and no one dies of starvation'.<sup>26</sup> And yet he would admit that he enjoyed being the leader; after giving some chocolates to a servant's daughter, who had got dressed up for the occasion, he wrote 'I love playing the munificent squire'.<sup>27</sup>

This last quote, after such a lengthy discussion about Heaney's ambiguity, adds a further factor to the mix. Is it that his views were so extreme because he liked to pose as various caricatures? His vivid imagination potentially confirms the theory that he enjoyed constantly (re)imagining himself. Reconstructing himself in letters to people back home he could play the loner distancing himself from society one minute, the socialite the next. Was he, therefore, actually more like other people in what he really thought and really did than he let on in his letters? After all, in his less verbose moments, he would reveal preoccupations that he shared with his more mainstream peers. For example, when commenting on his attempts to persuade some Swahilis to send their daughters to school, he said that they 'see the value of their sons learning to read and write but I am afraid they think their daughters should be kept in a state of ignorance and subjection pleasing to God and Mohamed!'<sup>28</sup> We shall perhaps never know, but it would seem that, alongside his genuine ambivalence about certain things, Heaney also enjoyed playing the contrarian. Others notice he had mood swings, and it may have been when he was most depressed that he was most critical of empire.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Heaney to parents, 15 February 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/81; Heaney to parents, 2 March 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/83

<sup>27</sup> Heaney to parents, 21 August 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/71

<sup>28</sup> Heaney to parents, 11 January 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/77

<sup>29</sup> R. C. H. Greig, diaries, 29 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/18

At any rate, Heaney identified himself as part of 'one of the new decadent school of empire builders',<sup>30</sup> though his sense of place in a wider group of people was an exaggeration occasioned by the fact that he happened to know a couple of officials who shared his point of view. One of these officials was Robert Greig.<sup>31</sup> Greig, whose father was a lecturer at Aberdeen University, came to Tanganyika fresh from an MA at Edinburgh University. That Greig was friends with Heaney was no doubt due in large part to their having very similar mindsets.<sup>32</sup> Greig devoured popular fiction such as works by Edgar Wallace and Oppenheim's detective novels and the light comedy plays of John van Druten.<sup>33</sup> But Greig also read difficult-to-obtain highbrow works, which he had imported, such as those of Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore was an early champion of the Indian independence movement, and his desire to be free from 'tyranny' and uncompromising nationalism is a persistent theme in his poetry.<sup>34</sup> Greig praised Tagore for having a 'humane outlook', and whilst such a commendation was aimed predominantly at Tagore's more spiritual, rather than political, works, this is nevertheless noteworthy.<sup>35</sup> Greig rated the work of Tagore above most Western works that he read, which is proof enough of his divergence from the majority. Greig was a theosophist who believed in reincarnation and karma, and was correspondingly heavily interested in meditation and spiritualism.<sup>36</sup> He was also preoccupied with love and selflessness as a means of attaining a higher sense of fulfilment,

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<sup>30</sup> Heaney to parents, 19 October 1929, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/4; see also Heaney to parents, 15 June 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2271/27

<sup>31</sup> Greig, diaries, 15 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/10; Greig, diaries, 29 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/18

<sup>32</sup> For example, Greig believed that Heaney was a man with a 'charming personality' and a 'very balanced outlook'; Greig, diaries, 15 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/10

<sup>33</sup> Greig, diaries, 27 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/17; Greig, diaries, 11 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/42; Greig, diaries, 22 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/71; Greig, diaries, 3 May 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/72

<sup>34</sup> H. M. Huritz, 'Ezra Pound and Rabindranath Tagore', in *American literature* 36 (1964), p.57

<sup>35</sup> Greig, diaries, 3 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/21

<sup>36</sup> Greig, diaries, 23 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/32; Greig, diaries, 22 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/66; Greig, diaries, 28 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/69. Furthermore, he opposed those that have 'an entirely scientific approach to problems', such as the Culwicks, who 'poo-pooed the idea that if a pregnant woman commits adultery it is bad for the child'; Greig, diaries, 18 November 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/186



wrote clunky romanticist poetry,<sup>37</sup> and was sympathetic to certain aspects of socialism.<sup>38</sup> He was of a mindset that was highly susceptible to changes in outlook; in Mahenge one day he 'inspected the gaol, and as a result a deep melancholy came over me. I felt tired + very conscious of the strife and unhappiness in the world, + was moved to poetry'.<sup>39</sup>

As was the case with Heaney, Greig was torn between the urban and the non-urban. He delighted in the appendages of modern civilization,<sup>40</sup> and admired those who were determined not to go 'native'.<sup>41</sup> He himself felt a tendency of the 'hard and lonely... primitive life' to overwhelm him;<sup>42</sup> in a

country like this where beauty, love, truth, + ideals, are not thrust upon [one], how essential it is for us to spend time looking for them ourselves, if we would not be drawn into the attractive idle life of sense which the people of the country + the country itself seem to draw one into. We lose sight of something more wonderful + attractive than just living, if we do not keep these Greater things before us in culture, beauty + love. No one gives them to us.<sup>43</sup>

And yet he would ruminate that alone 'how true we become Godly or beastly, knowing no compromise of the physical contact between persons of culture',<sup>44</sup> and how he felt aware that he 'really lived in + were [sic] part of the beauty of nature. The beautiful scene was not a picture, but habitude + our abode + inheritance. A wonderful feeling.'<sup>45</sup>

Greig, by and large, extolled the universal and overriding value of a certain theosophically-informed brand of civility. Even here, though, he regularly questioned his ability to act upon

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<sup>37</sup> Greig, diaries, 25 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/16; Greig, diaries, 19 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/30; Greig, diaries, 9 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/40

<sup>38</sup> Greig, diaries, 28 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/18

<sup>39</sup> Greig, diaries, 14 July 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/113

<sup>40</sup> Greig, diaries, 14 December 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/200; Greig, diaries, 15 December 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/201

<sup>41</sup> Greig, diaries, 20 September 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/152

<sup>42</sup> Greig, diaries, 24 February 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/33

<sup>43</sup> Greig, diaries, 25 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/16; see also Greig, diaries, 27 October 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/173

<sup>44</sup> Greig, diaries, 11 June 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/94

<sup>45</sup> Greig, diaries, 12 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/60

his will along such lines. He perceived there to have been a discrepancy between idealistic ways of conceiving of the world and of a reality that confounded attempts to change things.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, it was difficult to compromise between the 'Mandate ideal' and 'the actual British or White + Native individuals who are so non-idealistic.'<sup>47</sup>

Heaney's doubts over the value of the empire arose out of an uncertain approach as to what civilization and the 'primitive' represented. His mindset meant that the way he perceived his role and that of his peers was more in keeping with modern libertarian ideas than those pre-eminent in the 'thirties. 'Life as an Administrative Officer', he confided to his diary

is bound if not counteracted to cause the feeling of all the powerfulness of the state of and intrinsic superiority of its will to predominate over the individual. No state, God, or person has any right intrinsically over the individual... At best it must be a compromise of social necessity of combined conclusions of the many exercising a right within certain limits. To secure a ready delight in feeling for the individual as a humanity [sic] rather than a cog in the state's machine, exercise of the will must be made for the spontaneous love of mankind. This I feel is pre-eminently necessary if one would free oneself [sic] from the slavery of the God of Government.<sup>48</sup>

His lack of faith in the supposed superiority of the Administrative Officer got him into arguments with those of his peers who remained in the mainstream.<sup>49</sup>

All of this was shot through with a sense of pessimism. This is demonstrated by Greig's reading of *A grain of wheat* by Kagawa Toyohiko. Toyohiko was a Japanese Christian Socialist keen to avoid what was perceived as the spread of the many graves problems directly engendered by Western industrial capitalism. He advocated a workers' democracy in which vertically structured industrial unions under the 'wardship' of national guilds would

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<sup>46</sup> One example of this is at Greig, diaries, 21 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/14

<sup>47</sup> Greig, diaries, 15 January 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/10

<sup>48</sup> Greig, diaries, 11 June 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/94

<sup>49</sup> Greig diaries, 14 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/43

engender 'a proletarian paradise within which each individual would be freed from the bonds of wage-slavery to realize his own innermost creative potential.'<sup>50</sup> As has been argued in chapter five, this was obviously very different to the sorts of economic plans that most colonial officials were attempting to affect in Africa. But Tokohiko's work affected Greig deeply, leading him to wonder 'how much opportunity for real service there is in our job here.'<sup>51</sup> At any rate, he felt that while it 'seems more + more evident to me that easy going + pleasant though the native can be + is, he is in outlook irresponsible + must be forced to do everything.'<sup>52</sup> Elsewhere, he would say that 'one feels that as always with the natives, when one is getting on with them, one is being hoodwinked.'<sup>53</sup>

However, the presence of such pessimistic, ambivalent colonial officials was not confined to Tanganyika. This further discredits the idea discussed in chapter five that it was something unique to the mandated territory that predisposed those in it to a certain mindset. David Bayley, who served in Nigeria, was definitely outside of the political mainstream. In his diaries of his time at King's College in Cambridge, he related a discussion he had had with one Gerald Thompson, where Bayley had expressed the view that 'the more you think, the more depressed you become. He denied it. But for me it is dead true... I hardly dare to let myself think too deeply about the prospects of my going to fight in a war'.<sup>54</sup> The way of the modern world for Bayley tended towards 'over-education', which was 'leading us to a Hell on earth'; this was of extreme discomfort for him, especially given that he did not believe in the existence of a benevolent God.<sup>55</sup> Yet he felt compelled to think about things, thus further consolidating his own 'over-education'. He constantly discussed the events of the day in his diaries, always fearing the worst.<sup>56</sup> Of his political beliefs, while at university he described himself as 'Conservative in imperial affairs Liberal [sic] in economic and Socialist in

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<sup>50</sup> G. Bikle, 'Utopianism and social planning in the thought of Kagawa Toyohiko', in *Monumenta Nipponica* 25 (1970), pp.449-50

<sup>51</sup> Greig, diaries, 5 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/56

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Greig, diaries, 7 April 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2319/57

<sup>54</sup> D. Bayley, diaries, 14 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/5

<sup>55</sup> Bayley, diaries, 14 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/5

<sup>56</sup> Bayley, diaries, 26 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/11

foreign',<sup>57</sup> and stated that he could not see 'why Communism should not work, and raise up an entirely new civilization.'<sup>58</sup> A sceptic who railed against big business, the mass media and 'polite society', he seems to have actively courted antagonism; while at a public lecture he suggested the returning of Gibraltar to Spain,<sup>59</sup> as controversial a political move then as it is for some today.<sup>60</sup> He retained this streak when in Africa. During the Abdication Crisis in 1936, Bayley noted in his diary that he had had an argument with someone regarding Mrs. Simpson. Bayley hoped that King Edward VIII would marry her, because it would 'infuriate the "society", and distress others'.<sup>61</sup>

While not the closest of friends, Bayley got on well with Greig, and they met on several occasions to discuss the empire prior to their setting out for Africa.<sup>62</sup> The two had similar approaches to the world in certain regards. For example, Bayley sympathised with Greig's belief the West's economic collapse was due any time soon, while 'politically there seems to be every chance of us returning to a Dark Age.'<sup>63</sup> Despite this, Bayley advocated imperialism as a means of pushing civilisation forward, railing against those who opposed British rule in India for example, and disagreeing with the idea that all colonies should be run on a mandate system.<sup>64</sup> At the same time Bayley was continually worried about imminent global conflict and yet ambiguous with it. In October 1930 he wrote

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<sup>57</sup> Bayley, diaries, 25 January 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/30

<sup>58</sup> Bayley, diaries, 21 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/8; see also Bayley, diaries, 2 December 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/19

<sup>59</sup> Bayley, diaries, 22 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/10

<sup>60</sup> For example, M. J. Rendall, 'Schoolboys' tour to East Africa', in *The Times*, 21 March 1934, p.10; L. G. Wickham-Legg to the editor, 'Gibraltar: The British title', in *The Times*, 15 April 1939, p.13; D. Hannan, 'We should be flying the flag, not worrying about burning it', in *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 November 2006, accessed at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2006/11/01/do0101.xml> on 1 December 2006

<sup>61</sup> Bayley, diaries, 25 November 1936, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/85

<sup>62</sup> Bayley, diaries, 24 January 1932, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/63

<sup>63</sup> Bayley, diaries, 24 November 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/60; see also Bayley, diaries, 10 November 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/58-9

<sup>64</sup> Bayley, diaries, 15 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/5

Whether civilisation could stand another war I don't know. perhaps [sic] it would be as well if it couldn't. After all, the human race is only a lot of little maggots crawling about on a decaying planet.<sup>65</sup>

He remained a left-winger when in Africa. If anything, he became more emphatically so. In July 1932 Bayley arrived in Nigeria, where he was stationed at Opobo, before moving on to the Gambia in September 1936. In that year he read Trotsky's *History of the Russian revolution*. In this, the Stalinist belief that it was possible for a permanent revolution to be established in one country is rejected in favour of the view that a revolution had to be global to be successful.<sup>66</sup> Upon finishing the work, Bayley began to believe that it was the Trotskyists, rather than 'Constitutional Socialists' such as himself, who might be in the right. He pondered whether he and those like him were actually just 'playing at toy soldiers', and that one may have to face the fact that 'a decent world can only come after a complete and absolute break with the past' after all.<sup>67</sup>

He also retained his pessimistic streak. In 1937 he read Tolstoy's *Resurrection*, which extols the virtues of redemption through Christianity, and ends on a happy note.<sup>68</sup> Upon his conversion to Christianity, Tolstoy had become optimistic about the future, and that his own view of what was 'right' would prevail, that wars and governments' holds over their peoples would falter as peace, love and conscientious objection prevailed.<sup>69</sup> When he had finished

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<sup>65</sup> Bayley, diaries, 26 October 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/11

<sup>66</sup> See J. Arch Getty, 'Trotsky in exile: The founding of the Fourth International', in *Soviet Studies* 38 (1986), pp.24-35

<sup>67</sup> Bayley, diaries, 9 November 1936, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/81-2; see also his change in perception of Mussolin throughout the 'thirties, though, of course, it is recognised that such a change was not merely limited to those on the left; Bayley, diaries, 15 May 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/42-3; Bayley, diaries, 3 June 1931, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/45; Bayley, diaries, 21 November 1936, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/83

<sup>68</sup> L. Tolstoy, *Resurrection*, L. Maude (trans.), (Mineola, NY, 2004), passim, especially pp.219-32

<sup>69</sup> 'Count Tolstoy on the war: "Bethink yourselves!"', in *The Times*, 27 June 1904, p.4; P. Brock, "'A light shining in the darkness": Tolstoi and the imprisonment of conscientious objectors in Imperial Russia', in *The Slavonic and East European Review* 81 (2003), pp.683-97. This ties in with Tolstoy's wider views of history as a movement of forces that individuals such as Napoleon had no control over; this is one of the key motifs of *War and peace*; R. Hare, 'Tolstoy's motives for writing "War and peace"', in *Russian review* 15 (1956), pp.110-21

reading the novel, Bayley noted in his diary that Tolstoy's 'Lansburian [sic] belief in the goodness of human nature repels me.'<sup>70</sup>

However, Bayley was constantly torn – he wanted to be involved in European affairs and apart from them at the same time. He sometimes felt remote from Europe,<sup>71</sup> but he could not help ruminating on the news. Africa was too far from the action in both good and bad ways. But what implications did all of this have for his perception of a British role in Africa? As might be inferred from the above, Bayley viewed the British Empire primarily as a means of his avoiding what was going on in Europe at this time. In stark contrast to the majority of diary keepers, who filled their pages with a wealth of small details as to what was going on in their immediate vicinities, Bayley only discussed African matters infrequently. After all, he stated his reasons for having entered the Colonial Service in the first place bluntly enough. He was sick of England with its crises and industrialism. When considering his options in 1930, he wrote

I wonder if I would like the Colonial Service as a job... I should like the job, provided the part of Africa I got sent to was not too industrialised and pseudo-civilized... at all events it would get me out of England.<sup>72</sup>

Bayley wanted change in Africa in keeping with a modern socialist ideal, having endorsed industrialisation at the same time as going against it,<sup>73</sup> and yet did not want the introduction of such things to Africa.<sup>74</sup> It was an extreme romantic position borne of pessimism, and yet his sense of a desire to improve things never deserted him; he wanted to avoid the slide into chaos but did not know how this might be effected. The end of the 'thirties only gave Bayley increased ammunition for this sense of impending doom. On 2 October 1938, the day after

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<sup>70</sup> Bayley, diaries, 10 September 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/101

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, Bayley, diaries, 23 April 1945, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/404

<sup>72</sup> Bayley, diaries, 19 December 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/23

<sup>73</sup> As an aside on this aspect of his thought, see Bayley, diaries, 7 September 1937, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/101

<sup>74</sup> Bayley, diaries, 19 December 1930, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/23

Hitler marched his troops into the Sudetenland, he wrote that 'I think it well on the cards that history will regard this week as the beginning of the end of the British Empire.'<sup>75</sup>

Suffice to say, men such as Heaney, Greig and Bayley were rare. Colonial officials did not, on the whole, reflect on theosophist plans for attaining a higher state of consciousness or Trotskyist conceptions of world revolution. However, if there was not something unique to Tanganyika that might have precipitated a contradictory mindset to the exclusion of its emergence elsewhere, it might be asked with justification whether or not the very nature of men such as Heaney as purveyors of certain cultural forms and modes of thinking lent itself automatically to ambiguity? One counterexample here should suffice to guard against any tendency to take this reductionist line.

C. A. E. Lea, who arrived in the Sudan in 1926 and spent his interwar years in Kassala, Khartoum and Northern Kordofan, was well acquainted with writings of all sorts. A voracious reader acquainted with everything from Ethel M. Dell to Aristophanes and Roman playwright Plautus, and *The Times* while in the S.P.S.,<sup>76</sup> he was also a fan of modern prose and poetry.<sup>77</sup> Lea's gently self-effacing sense of humour led him to declare that 'Government Inspectors' were a 'sort of comic Don Quixote or travelling barons [sic]'.<sup>78</sup> This is exactly the same sort of self-awareness that pervaded Lea's Tanganyikan peers, which in many ways prefigured the onset of the postmodernist age and the heavy use of irony as a potential destabiliser of a narrative's surface sentiments. And yet, this is the point at which he diverged from these peers. Lea emphatically believed that the British had a role to play in changing the country for the better. While sheikhs were more than capable of governing at a local level, they required that their ways undergo a gradual modification.<sup>79</sup> For example, while recognising what he felt were the historical circumstances that had led to the emergence of slavery, this did not stop Lea from working to see its eradication, albeit at a gradual rate to

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<sup>75</sup> Bayley, diaries, 2 October 1938, RHO Mss.Afr.r.47/116

<sup>76</sup> Lea to parents, 29 December 1926, SAD 645/7/16; Lea to parents, 7 January 1927, SAD 645/7/18; Lea to parents, 10 February 1927, SAD 645/7/37; Lea to parents, 23 February 1927, SAD 645/7/4; Lea, trek journals, 29 March 1931, SAD 645/9/44

<sup>77</sup> Lea to parents, 31 January 1927, SAD 645/7/28; Lea to parents, 3 February 1927, SAD 645/7/31

<sup>78</sup> Lea to parents, 10 February 1927, SAD 645/7/37

<sup>79</sup> Lea to parents, 28 December 1926, SAD 645/7/15

ensure that 'serfs' were resettled in their original masters' tribes and given steady work.<sup>80</sup> Lea was another 'indirect-ruler', and believed it was necessary that efficiency and justice were introduced on a more systematised basis in the Sudan, which ran parallel to his wish for urban infrastructures to be organised along more westernised lines.<sup>81</sup> This could happen because Lea felt that the Sudanese were more than capable of adopting such necessities.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, there is a more over-arching trend in accounting for why some were ambivalent. It would seem that, instead of it merely being the modernists who were uncertain as to the role of the British, this apprehension arose from those who viewed themselves as 'outsiders'. This was a different sense of 'outsider' to the 'bush' D.C.s examined in chapter four, who felt themselves to be outsiders because they rejected town social life and the like, but who wished for a degree of responsibility that they felt could only be obtained if they lived away from urban centres. Such officials never rejected Western ways. The outsiders of the present chapter might or might not have enjoyed socialising, urban existences and the rest on a superficial level, but they felt uneasy about upholding the values of their peers. While the way in which one perceived oneself and the wider world is so complicated that it would be foolish to argue for the existence of any strictly determinist link between psychological well-being and the perception of others, such outsiders were usually unhappy, due either to a pessimistic mindset they had prior to their leaving Britain, or to melancholia and frustration borne of a sustained illness or another event they endured while living in Africa.

In the case of Elliot Balfour, who worked in the Sudan, it was an often negative and frustrating time in the Sudan, rather than any modernist leanings, that predisposed him

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<sup>80</sup> Lea, trek journals, 27 March 1931, SAD 645/9/40; Lea, trek journals, 4 April 1931, SAD 645/9/57; see also Lea, trek journals, 29 March 1931, SAD 645/9/43

<sup>81</sup> Lea to parents, 12 December 1926, SAD 645/7/8-9; see also Lea to parents, 16 January 1927, SAD 645/7/22

<sup>82</sup> Lea to parents, 12 December 1926, SAD 645/7/8; Lea, trek journals, 14 February 1927, SAD 645/7/40. His writings are full of positive references to Sudanese people. Those with racist views, such as an engineer by the name of Parr whom Lea met during the construction of a bridge, were written of witheringly for displaying 'shocking' views, while those who did not, such as a merchant by the name of Darling, were written about positively. The work of the pupils of a school he visited soon after his arrival in Khasm el Girba in Kassala impressed Lea. Such ideas were compounded by Lea's long and frequent conversations with his mamur friends on topics such as King George and democracy; Lea to parents, 29 December 1926, SAD 645/7/16; Lea to parents, 31 January 1927, SAD 645/7/28; Lea to parents, 23 March 1927, SAD 645/7/57; Lea, trek journals, 29 March 1931, SAD 645/9/43



towards a mindset that questioned what the British were doing and whether they had the ability to really change anything. Balfour provides a rare example where the positivity of the metropole was not endorsed. This was despite his ready interaction with British culture; for instance he knew much about the works of novelists such as Rider Haggard,<sup>83</sup> P. G. Wodehouse and others,<sup>84</sup> as well those by historians such as G. M. Trevelyan.<sup>85</sup> Most of his letters home took an unhappy tone, which is understandable given the prolonged periods of time that Balfour was ill. He contracted malaria far more frequently than the majority of his peers,<sup>86</sup> while he suffered a mysterious affliction in his legs, possibly exaggerated in a hypochondriac manner, that apparently severely impaired his mobility for about a year over 1934 and 1935.<sup>87</sup> In addition, he suffered from other illnesses and mishaps such as being burgled towards the end of his time in Singa in the Fung Province.<sup>88</sup> Balfour felt that the time he spent convalescing seriously affected his ability to both socialise with his English peers and visit those areas that he governed as often as he had wished.<sup>89</sup> As a result of his unhappiness and alienation from Sudanese society he adopted an often mocking and condescending tone towards the Sudanese people. The Arabic people of Singa as a whole conducted 'inconceivable amounts' of intrigue and 'double dealing',<sup>90</sup> as did those of Wad Medani, who were also split into one of two groups – either 'noisy' and 'truculent' or 'inveterate camel thieves'.<sup>91</sup> Nomads were only capable of making a 'dam [sic] nuisance of

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<sup>83</sup> E. A. Balfour to mother, 6 October 1933, SAD 606/4/56

<sup>84</sup> Balfour to mother, 29 September 1933, SAD 606/4/53

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> For only two of many examples, see Balfour to mother, 4 November 1933, SAD 606/4/64; Balfour to mother, 19 November 1937, SAD 606/6/13

<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Balfour to mother, 12 December 1934, SAD 606/5/10; Balfour to mother, 28 December 1934, SAD 606/5/13

<sup>88</sup> Balfour to mother, 16 September 1932, SAD 606/3/71; Balfour to mother, 18 January 1934, SAD 606/4/87; Balfour to mother, 27 January 1938, SAD 606/6/19-21

<sup>89</sup> Balfour to mother, 12 December 1934, SAD 606/5/10

<sup>90</sup> Balfour to mother, 4 March 1933, SAD 606/4/4

<sup>91</sup> Balfour to mother, 28 November 1934, SAD 606/5/4; Balfour to mother, 7 December 1934, SAD 606/5/8

themselves',<sup>92</sup> while the people of Suki were 'a population of cosmopolitan blackguards'.<sup>93</sup>

Black peoples were deemed even worse than their Arabic counterparts.<sup>94</sup>

Such sentiments were repeated when Balfour became a tutor at Gordon College in Khartoum in September 1936. His pupils convinced him that 'the Sudanese had as much chance of getting properly educated within the next 200 years as a pig has of flying'.<sup>95</sup> They were being taught at a level they were not yet ready for, given that they were 'an ignorant crowd. Even the best of them ... [they all] have *miles* to go before they become efficient and trustworthy members of society'.<sup>96</sup> His impression of the Sudanese masters was not much different, supporting Edward Atiyah's recollection that his British counterparts at Gordon College were aloof and condescending.<sup>97</sup> For Balfour, any status quo established by the British was fragile, and consequently any political developments could only undermine the hard work of S.P.S. members such as himself.<sup>98</sup> Giving more power to the native rulers of the Singa District had only increased the amount of corruption and mistreatment that the Sudanese people had suffered. Balfour believed that such occurrences should have been shown to those who advocated moves towards Sudanese self-government in order to show them the error of their ways.<sup>99</sup>

However, there is a problem with making claims as to the existence of contradiction. In doing so, we run the risk of failing to appreciate that tension and contradiction, while present in a mindset, were sometimes not the source of an overwhelming sense that the British should not or could not change Africa and the Africans. Such postcolonialist assumptions seek to place it at the centre of the picture, rather than at the fringes. As Peter Hallward, who is rare in his explicit critique of postcolonialism, has written, what is 'remarkable is that postcolonial theory should so often have argued that the colonial relationship is especially

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<sup>92</sup> Balfour to mother, 4 March 1933, SAD 606/4/5

<sup>93</sup> Balfour to mother, 19 November 1933, SAD 606/4/67

<sup>94</sup> Balfour to mother, 5 November 1937, SAD 606/6/11

<sup>95</sup> Balfour to mother, 12 September 1936, SAD 606/5/40-1

<sup>96</sup> Emphasis Balfour's own; Balfour to mother, 9 October 1936, SAD 606/5/45-6; Balfour to mother, 24 October 1936, SAD 606/5/48

<sup>97</sup> Balfour to mother, 9 October 1936, SAD 606/5/46; E. Atiyah, *An Arab tells his story: A study in loyalties* (London, 1946), p.137

<sup>98</sup> Balfour to mother, 6 February 1938, SAD 606/6/23

<sup>99</sup> Balfour to mother, 12 January 1934, SAD 606/4/84

‘ambivalent and symbiotic’ rather than minimally or trivially so’.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, there were some who, while exhibiting some of the tendencies noted in the present chapter, nevertheless subscribed to the ideas of the majority more frequently.

Hubert Childs served in Nigeria from 1928 until joining up in World War Two. When, in 1933, staff shortages had been dealt with and he was able to leave Ibadan on tour, he noted in his journal that he now ‘hope[d] to make frequent escapes’.<sup>101</sup> Earlier that same year, after only seven weeks of ‘sitting tight’ in the same city he rejoiced when able to go on tour once more and have another opportunity for ‘stretching my legs’.<sup>102</sup> This was partially a wish to experience ‘simplicity’. While out on camp, and extremely moved by his surroundings – ‘this life is too splendid, the country too perfect, my pursuits too interesting for me to tear myself away as long as I can be spared from Ibadan’ – he argued that

this is the proper thing... This is the real Nigeria + the true enjoyment. These simple hunter-farmers the real people [sic]. As I walk their paths my silent prayer is ever + again that the future may throw me continually among them.’<sup>103</sup>

But this was an extreme feeling, written at a time when Childs was at his most flowery. As he would later admit, it was ‘the old truth, which I know so well, that my spirits are governed largely by the nature of the country in which I find myself’.<sup>104</sup> Away from bucolic scenes Childs was, predominantly, grounded in the pragmatic. This is not to claim that he was not torn between the ‘undeveloped’ and the ‘developed’ ideas of Africa, because he evidently was. He felt that the coming of the British was of negative effect in part; after witnessing a village reception for him on the occasion of his coming to build a road, he wrote in his diary

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<sup>100</sup> P. Hallward, *Absolutely postcolonial: Writing between the singular and the specific* (Manchester, 2001), p.xv, see also p.xiv, xvi

<sup>101</sup> Childs, diaries, 8 July 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>102</sup> Childs, diaries, 13 January 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>103</sup> Childs, diaries, 24 September 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>104</sup> Childs, diaries, 9 March 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

that 'the real proper communal spirit was at work – the spirit of team work which we are doing so much to break down.'<sup>105</sup>

Nevertheless, his other ideas minimise the extent to which he felt the pull of the 'primitive' away from a unified conception of development. Firstly, it is important to note that while Childs made his dislike for Ibadan quite clear, officials of all types did not think of the city particularly highly. Richard St. John Hartley, for example, was a lieutenant with the Nigeria Regiment from 1921 until 1924, and was certainly a lot less 'bush' than Childs. And yet even Hartley saw fit to argue that Ibadan was 'tangled up in the bush [and] stretches for 4 miles... the ugliest town I've seen in Nigeria & I have travelled a lot'.<sup>106</sup> Child's desire to leave the place was also based upon a wish to work within his own Western-derived set of priorities. His 'escapes' from Ibadan allowed him to 'be free + one's own master again'.<sup>107</sup> This was predicated upon a desire to develop and to change. Indeed, Childs expressed the same sort of belief that Africa needed to be 'restored' to a point of sustainable stasis as many of his peers. For example, he oversaw the construction of a new village that was to be the relocation site of an old settlement. He deemed this relocation a necessity to ensure that everyone had decent-sized plots of land, and lived in better, more sanitary, conditions.<sup>108</sup> Similarly, if Eruwa were tidied up, with certain plants and trees added, and 'a little trouble' taken, it could easily have become a 'delightful place'.<sup>109</sup> This is in keeping with a wider desire to reconfigure the African landscape based upon his own ideas about what constituted 'beautiful' or 'delightful', but also about what was 'useful'. Showing the same lack of appreciation of environmental issues as some of those around him, he exclaimed 'How many times a day do I wish that this was an open country and that the majesty of its contours could be appreciated! Stripped of its trees it would be the grandest walking country I know.'<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Childs, diaries, 12 October 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>106</sup> R. St. J. Hartley to D. Hartley, 2 January 1924, RCMS 22/40

<sup>107</sup> Childs, diaries, 8 July 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>108</sup> Childs, diaries, 3 December 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

<sup>109</sup> Childs, diaries, 11 July 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>110</sup> Childs, diaries, 6 March 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

He was pleased to report when changes being made were going successfully and were being appreciated by Africans at large.<sup>111</sup> His ideas as to the value of what he found in Africa were based on conclusions he drew on a case-by-case basis. Childs found the veteran Otun Bale in Igboora, Ajala, 'a little too autocratic in his choices + [he] pays insufficient regards to traditional practice.'<sup>112</sup> But this did not mean that Childs was a fan of all that was 'pre-colonial'. For instance, when on tour he noted that Offa was 'a nice little town but, judging from its extensive land rights, historic'; he disliked this quality of being 'historic' because it made the resolution of conflict more difficult.<sup>113</sup> He clearly wanted 'traditional' leaders to be installed throughout the areas he worked, even if who these people were was not immediately apparent.<sup>114</sup>

For him, roads and road construction was a very good thing,<sup>115</sup> partly because it brought outer villages into closer 'economic touch' with larger areas of habitation.<sup>116</sup> His private writings are permeated with an immense satisfaction when work was completed successfully. For example, when he met the Izi workers who had built five miles of road in 24 days, he wrote the 'whole thing is a revelation to me + one feels that with people like Izis anything is possible. I am very proud to have been with them.'<sup>117</sup> In Lipenja he inspected a Native Administration School, which he found 'delightfully kept... if the school is run as well as it appears, it should indeed be a centre of light in a backward district.'<sup>118</sup> Similarly, in the British Cameroons, he was unhappy at the state of the villagers, who he deemed unkempt, malnourished, 'characterless and primitive'.<sup>119</sup> Thus, we have here a man who would, closely conjoined with a desire for some sort of rustic simplicity, express in passing a firm disliking of what the British were attempting to do. Nevertheless, this antipathy seems to have been based upon the belief that the British were not able to effect a perfect reform of the African

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<sup>111</sup> Childs, 'A report on the Western district of the Ibadan division of the Oyo Province', 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(5)/52

<sup>112</sup> Childs, diaries 15 January 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>113</sup> Childs, diaries, 10 August 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>114</sup> Childs, diaries, 17 April 1935, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

<sup>115</sup> Childs, diaries, 8 August 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>116</sup> Childs, 'A report', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(5)/52

<sup>117</sup> Childs, diaries, 15 September 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)

<sup>118</sup> Childs, diaries, 27 October 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

<sup>119</sup> Childs, diaries, 23 October 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

continent. Some of what would be supplanted would be missed but, then again, much of it would not.

These sorts of ideas are only too understandable. Childs occasionally read romanticist novels such as *Wuthering heights*,<sup>120</sup> which is the type of work that most colonial officials did not bother with. *Wuthering Heights* is frequently read as a primitivist discomfort with modern society and 'civilization' in a manner that recalls D. H. Lawrence.<sup>121</sup> But, examining the books that Childs read, such works were drowned out by *The Times*, works by Galsworthy and Trollope, and crime fiction.<sup>122</sup> He also read James Williamson's *The evolution of England*, a popular work that portrayed England's history of being one of continuous improvement.<sup>123</sup> Here was a man, it seems, who enjoyed an occasional fantastic excursion into some lost world of the primitive, of Heathcliffe out on the moors as much as of the 'native' African shrugging off the shackles of civility, but who in the main read much the same texts, and shared the same presuppositions, as everyone else in the colonial services.

A similar example of someone who expressed uncertainty, but not to the degree that Greig, Heaney and the rest felt, was David Daltry, who worked in British Togoland. In letters to his mother in 1927, Daltry recounted his pleasant experiences in the countryside of the Ho district.<sup>124</sup> It was evidently with heavy heart that he left there for Koforidua in the east of the Gold Coast. He disliked the place, with 'its trousers and ties'<sup>125</sup> and its 'over-pampered, lying, cosmopolitan people... a poisonous, lawyer-ridden semi-educated crowd'.<sup>126</sup> This opposition was based upon his belief that such Africans had taken onboard certain Western aspects and exaggerated them to a ridiculous degree, by becoming obsessed with suing others at any

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<sup>120</sup> Childs, diaries, 15 October 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(1)/I

<sup>121</sup> D. K. Reed, 'The discontents of civilization in *Wuthering heights* and *Buddenbrooks*', in *Comparative literature* 41 (1989), pp.209-29

<sup>122</sup> Childs, diaries, 17 December 1933, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(2); Childs, diaries, 1 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(2); Childs, diaries, 4 March 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(2); Childs, diaries, 28 October 1934, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3); Childs, diaries, 29 January 1936, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3)

<sup>123</sup> Childs, diaries, 24 January 1936, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1861(3); J. A. Williamson, *The evolution of England: A commentary on the facts* (Oxford, 1931). This Whiggish view of history was criticised by a minority of scholars at the time, of whom Herbert Butterfield is now the most famous; H. Butterfield, *The Whig interpretation of history* (1931; New York, 1965)

<sup>124</sup> See, for example, D. R. Daltry, letter to mother, 8 March 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/12

<sup>125</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 6 May 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/30

<sup>126</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 6 May 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/29

opportunity, for example.<sup>127</sup> For him, most of the Gold Coast had become 'much too civilised'.<sup>128</sup> In addition to an instinctual dislike of those he deemed partially-Westernised, Daltry seems to have attempted to justify this stance on the grounds that entering into such a Western mode of existence was ridiculous, because 'all these niggers... will not work unless they are driven',<sup>129</sup> even though he evidently enjoyed the graft that working in Africa as a colonial official entailed.<sup>130</sup>

Daltry's dislike of Koforidua, however, certainly did not mean that he opposed the idea that the work of the British was to 'improve' the continent. His passion for, and fascination with, construction is evident. While working in and around Ho, Daltry noted, 'I love road work... there is a satisfaction about making a good road which is aesthetic'.<sup>131</sup> This was despite the fact that, for Daltry, road building was something that improved Africa despite it not being indigenous, despite it 'almost defying nature'.<sup>132</sup> Where Koforidua's bureaucracy got him down, he delighted in building work in a nearby village.<sup>133</sup> Thus, for Daltry, whilst the British had, regardless of their intentions, allowed less-desirable traits to emerge among the Africans of the Gold Coast, the empire nonetheless remained the best framework by which change could occur within the continent.<sup>134</sup>

There were clearly those who joined the colonial services who felt both the pull of the 'civilising duty' that had been drilled into all in a sustained manner from an early age, and of that 'romantic' Africa that could be mulled over beside a campfire at the end of the day as thoughts were collected. These were the ones for whom 'civilising' work hindered the existence of the romantic in Africa. They were frequently modernist in mindset, and presaged outlooks that would become more popular after 1945. But they were not always so, and it is more accurate to state that such people were those who viewed themselves as partially

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 3 June 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/48

<sup>129</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 25 September 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/59

<sup>130</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 21 August 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/53

<sup>131</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 22 March 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/16

<sup>132</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 7 April 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/19-20

<sup>133</sup> Daltry, letter to mother, 6 May 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/30

<sup>134</sup> For his endorsement of imperial activity see Daltry, letter to mother, 25 September 1927, RHO Mss.Afr.s.2222/58

removed from the mores of interwar society. Those who felt this tension were those who ruminated and saw themselves as observers of society, part of this society, but partially detached from it at the same time. They were sometimes social outcasts or, at least, not keen on involving themselves with what they saw as the petty trivialities of other colonials. As chapter four showed, this desire not to integrate, to avoid the social obligations, did not always engender a refutation of paradigmatic approaches to the way Africa was to be developed. But among some it did. Something in the way that certain officials understood society, which is difficult to discern from private diaries and letters, precipitated a critical stance towards it. Where the evidence exists, this mindset was frequently in place before the officials set sail but, due to the limits of space and the evidence examined, it is impossible to assess the degree that this was finely attenuated by any exterior African reality.

Nevertheless, detracting from the extent to which ambivalence might be said to have been at the heart of all perceptions of colonizing activity is the fact that there were some who expressed reservations about British rule in Africa only in passing. This might have been a result of their being emotional at the time of writing. More often, however, it was as a result of the belief that not all that one society sought to impose upon another was flawless. It is merely that for this minority, it was impossible to bring about Lugard's plan for 'absolute equality in the paths of knowledge and culture... equality in things spiritual; agreed divergence in the physical and material'.<sup>135</sup> They were the unheeded critics surrounded by believers.

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<sup>135</sup> Lugard, 'The colour problem', p.283



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## Conclusion

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A. N. Wilson believes that two 'distinctive products' of the interwar period, the cryptic crossword and the mystery story, were expressions of a wider belief 'that if one could only worry at a problem for long enough it would have a single simple solution'.<sup>1</sup> In isolation, such a belief looks problematic; such 'products' could just as easily be read as a desire to retreat into an imaginary world where such simplicity was possible, away from a real world where it was not. But, when considered in light of other factors, Wilson's point is valid. Widespread confidence in Britain's ability to surmount difficulties remained well into the end of the interwar period.

This means there is a discrepancy between how some perceive the period today and how it was perceived then, which has wider implications that are sometimes forgotten in historical writing. By looking at any period as playing host to a series of 'big' events, we overlook the fact that there was much more that constituted the nature of an interwar middle-class Briton's existence. There were other things to be concerned with in the news, items that now appear to be 'dead ends' telling us nothing of what is retrospectively judged to be of lasting relevance. In this interwar Britons were not so dissimilar from those of the present day. For example, the gossip and scandal surrounding the Russell case exemplified a general fascination amongst the upper-middle classes in the 'twenties for the momentary glimpses into the lives of the

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, *After the Victorians*, p.293

landed and the wealthy such events afforded.<sup>2</sup> Britain was not constantly biting its collective fingernails as to what the next big and upsetting event that was to take place might be until the implications of the coming to power of the European dictators for the stability of the continent and the wider world were realised.

This sense of surety was compounded by the nature of the economy and the media. The economic evidence suggests that the British Empire was able to mitigate the worst of the effects of 1929, disguising long-term systemic decline with short-term stability, generating a confidence, naïve or not, that extended into all facets of the affluent middle classes' social existence. Britain was still, while America remained isolationist, the pre-eminent world player. As for the media, an orthodoxy was established by the press that extolled the virtues of an empire unbowed by the Great War and underpinned by a perpetuated faith in race and the civilizing mission. Much of what Noam Chomsky says of the press' role in present-day America can be applied to interwar Britain.<sup>3</sup> The media at the time served the interests of state power. This is not to say that there was no debate about the way Britain should be headed, but this is in keeping with Chomsky's argument that debate should not be stilled. Debate 'has a system-reinforcing character if constrained within proper bounds... Controversy may rage as long as it adheres to the presuppositions that define the consensus of elites... [thus] helping to establish these doctrines as the very condition of thinkable thought'.<sup>4</sup> However, in the case of interwar British commentators, the majority seem to have believed what they were arguing. They served the interests of the state because they genuinely wanted to.

In a few pages of his noted *History of England*, G. M. Trevelyan encapsulated the beliefs of this majority. In his typically overarching style, he argued that political rule in Africa had been conducted 'according to the benevolent ideals that have been generally prevalent in Downing Street since the days of Wilberforce' and that, while calls for self-governance, particularly in India, were 'perhaps the most difficult problem that good government has

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<sup>2</sup> E. Hunter, *Christabel: The Russell case and after* (London, 1973) is one of a small but growing body of works on a topic of this sort, as is A. de Courcy, *1939: The last season* (London, 2003)

<sup>3</sup> N. Chomsky, *Necessary illusions: Thought control in democratic societies* (London, 1989), p.10

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48, see also p.75

ever created for itself', the Dominions demonstrated that the British Empire was 'becoming an English-speaking League of Nations', the solidarity shown by these Dominions between 1914 and 1918 having been an 'ordeal that no merely paper constitution could have survived.'<sup>5</sup> Any idea of Britain's power ebbing away was nonsense. In this light, the Boer War was a cause for celebration, for it 'put an end to the somewhat boastful type of imperialism which dominated the last years of the nineteenth century... [making] men of all parties take a more sober and broad-minded view of imperial duties and destiny'. Furthermore, the war was an impetus for military reform, without which the Great War might not have been won.<sup>6</sup>

The majority felt that such sobriety encompassed a sense of moderation and 'fair play'.<sup>7</sup> This, along with British ideas about modernity, industry, and so on, reveal a people with no issue about spreading what they viewed to be the values they felt had made them members of the world's pre-eminent nation. This confidence jars with what postcolonialists believe. While welcoming many of the findings of postcolonialist study, Parry has criticised scholars such as Bhabha and Spivak for not sufficiently grounding their works in a historical context as a means of discerning change in perceptions of empire over time, and for neglecting a materialist analyses of colonialism in favour of an insistence on textualist criticism.<sup>8</sup> Parry is correct to point out that in attempting to read ambiguity into all aspects of colonialist literature, postcolonialists have detached works of literature from the context in which they were generated, and interpreted them ahistorically. This is a tendency among politicised postcolonialists in particular, who use the past to validate points felt to be of importance in the present; of particular prominence has been Said's wish to show how late twentieth century US foreign policy was directed by the same assumptions as held by the European

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<sup>5</sup> G. M. Trevelyan, *History of England* (1926; Harlow, 1973), pp.783-4

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.794-5

<sup>7</sup> These are words that frequently crop up in popular sociological works about the English today; J. Paxman, *The English: A portrait of a people* (1998; London, 1999); K. Fox, *Watching the English: The hidden rules of English behaviour* (2004; London, 2005)

<sup>8</sup> Parry, *Postcolonialist studies: A materialist critique* (London, 2004), for example pp.19-26 Parry's political position on the far left makes it natural for her to attempt to wrest the anti-imperialist apparatus back to more traditionally Marxist methods; Parry, 'The new South Africa: The revolution postponed, internationalism deferred', in *Journal of postcolonial writing* 41 (2005), pp.179-88

imperial powers in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries.<sup>9</sup> Their overriding aim is to show how the empire-building foe can be defeated. In any struggle against Britain, France and so on, the perception of imperial power can be reduced by the act of showing up flaws and inconsistencies of historical empires. Thus, Robert Young comments that if

we consider the English novel, we find that what is portrayed as characterizing English experience is rather often the opposite, a sense of fluidity and a painful sense of, or need for, otherness. Perhaps the fixity of identity for which Englishness developed such a reputation arose because it was in fact continually being contested, and was rather designed to mask its uncertainty.<sup>10</sup>

For Young, writings regarding the 'uncertain crossing and invasion of identities' were numerous, 's[o] much so, indeed, that we could go so far as to claim it as *the* dominant motif of much English fiction.'<sup>11</sup>

These claims are problematic for two reasons. Firstly, many of the texts that Young reads – Forster, Joyce, and so on – were not, by their very nature, indicative of wider interwar trends. In the *Times Literary Supplement* in May 1917, the novelist Henry James wrote an article in which he predicted the four great novelists of the immediate future. He listed Compton Mackenzie, Gilbert Cannan, Hugh Walpole and D. H. Lawrence.<sup>12</sup> Of these, that a novelist

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<sup>9</sup> Said, *The world, the text, and the critic* (Cambridge, MA, 1983), p.264; Said, *Culture and imperialism* (London, 1993), p.18; see also S. Xie, 'Rethinking the problem of postcolonialism', in *New literary history* 28 (1997), p.7; G. C. Spivak, *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a history of the vanishing present* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), p.190; Spivak, 'Feminism and critical theory (1985)', in *The Spivak reader: Selected works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, D. Landry and G. MacLean (eds.), (New York, 1996), pp.53-74; Spivak, *Outside in the teaching machine* (New York, 1993); Cain and M. Harrison, 'Introduction,' in *Imperialism: Critical concepts in historical studies*, Cain and Harrison (ed.), (London, 2000), Volume I, p.19; Bhabha, *Location of culture*, pp.171-97; H. Schwarz, 'Mission impossible: Introducing postcolonial studies in the US academy,' in *A companion to postcolonial studies*, Schwarz and S. Ray (eds.), (Malden, MA, 2000), p.4; A. Quayson, 'Postcolonialism and postmodernism,' in *ibid.*, pp.87, 95; T. Olaniyan, 'Africa: Varied colonial legacies,' in *ibid.*, pp.269-70, 80; M. Gorra, *After empire: Scott, Naipaul, Rushdie* (Chicago, 1997), p.6

<sup>10</sup> R. J. C. Young, *Colonial desire: Hybridity in theory, culture and race* (London, 1995), pp.2-3

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3, see also p.161

<sup>12</sup> R. M. Bracco, *Merchants of hope: British middlebrow writers and the First World War, 1919-1939* (Oxford, 1983), p.54

held in such enduring regard as James would pick only one author that we would now see as having produced work of lasting literary value – D. H. Lawrence – is illuminating. This is because such a choice exemplifies the wider problem that is obvious but that still needs greater attention; namely, that grounding any historical analysis in critical responses to what authors had to say is crucial if we are not to merely map our own conceptions of the past upon those who are no longer able to retort. The dead ends are there if we peer hard enough into the historical gloom.

Secondly, and tied to the point just made, the works of the day that Young examines which were read more widely, such as Rider Haggard and Conrad, were understood in a different way to that which we now perceive them. They were interpreted within a different set of those ‘pre-understandings’ of Eagleton’s, the ‘dim context of beliefs and expectations within which the work’s various features will be assessed.’<sup>13</sup> For example, Conrad, the postcolonialists’ author of choice, slotted neatly into the preconceptions of the day, providing enough material for him to appear as both a man of his own time to his peers and as a man ahead of his time to us. Whereas for many today he signalled the end of empire, as a man of his time, he fitted into a paradigmatic endorsement of race as part of a ‘natural order’ and of the British Empire as a ‘good thing’, with things that go wrong in his novels indicative of the folly of those individuals who lacked the ability of the majority.

The elite non-fiction commentators of the time who were at the forefront of the public mind upheld the beliefs that surrounded this perception of the empire in Africa as a ‘good thing’. They, naturally, commented more upon where they felt the Empire was headed, rather than the novelists, who were busy depicting the then-present. Race, it was felt, provided the key to understanding how the British Empire could and should effect change, and allowed for the emergence of stable conceptions of such change within ‘static’ cultural structures. Coming from a climate of self-belief, these commentators, irrespective of whether they were discussing religion in the Gold Coast or the encroachment of the Sahara upon the Sudan, were advocates of Britain as the solution to African issues in a strictly paternalist manner. The

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<sup>13</sup> See above, Introduction, p.8, n.22

idea that the British were somehow ruining a pristine pre-modern paradise held little sway among the majority. They were not sentimentalists about an Africa that was disappearing forever, for indirect rule generated a certainty that those pre-colonial elements that the British liked would be retained. That such a belief extended to the anthropologists, that body frequently believed to have been the most resistant to any alteration of the 'untamed', is testament to this belief in the 'good' of the British Empire.

Just as significantly, commentators' own, often giddy, excitement at what they were doing did not present any opportunities for sad reflection on a passing order. As plans for education and construction show, the British never lost a wish to 'tame' and to 'order'. Rather, it was this act of remaking that was of the utmost interest. After all, the British believed that they were gradually saving the African from a world of internecine conflict and disease.

One of the wider ramifications of chapter three is that it serves to partially undermine the veracity of claims made by those post-Saidists who seek to conflate British ideas of the 'Other' into a few, key signifying tropes; the 'Other' as 'beast of burden', characterised by docility, patience, strength and stupidity, and the 'Other' as 'sloth', characterized by laziness and indolence, are two examples of this.<sup>14</sup> Even on a highly localised level, Africans were the subjects of differing interpretations as to their 'worth to humanity' and the like, which adds nuance of perception to the hegemonically racist and paternalist outlook. For example, there were peoples such as the Wanyamwezi who Tanganyikan official Thomas Scrivenorwa liked, and peoples such as the Mamwenye who he did not; within these likes and dislikes, assumptions as to the superiority of one grouping over another are omnipresent.<sup>15</sup> And, more often than not, such nuances were governed by an ongoing evaluation of the extent to which these differing sections of African society were felt willing to entertain change.

This refutation of a totalizing tendency is reinforced by the fact that Africa was perceived in a very different manner to other parts of the world. Southern America was often viewed as a

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<sup>14</sup> Naturally, criticisms of Said's totalising tendency come from those who follow a postcolonialist rejection of dichotomy in favour of uncertainty; Booth, 'Settler, missionary, and the state', p.56

<sup>15</sup> T. Scrivenor, diary, 10 January 1937, RHO Mss.Brit.Emp.s.376/104

place for the British to go and make their fortune.<sup>16</sup> China was instead a site of intelligence.<sup>17</sup>

While China could also be a site for luxury and opulence, it did not compare with Arab lands, the traditional conceptions of which were described in *1001 Arabian Nights*.<sup>18</sup> Despite such 'excesses', and while distance nevertheless remained, these places were still felt to be closer than Africa to Britain.<sup>19</sup>

Irrespective of whether or not the British Empire was exploitative and oppressive, the great majority of colonial officials firmly believed that their involvement was of great benefit to Africa.<sup>20</sup> Left-wing politician Tony Benn, while not the most likely candidate to endorse the works of empire, nevertheless feels that this genuine belief existed among the colonial officials he knew when he was younger.<sup>21</sup> A desire for change, to make a mark, was all-pervasive among administrators writing from a post-1939 vantage point. For instance, one official writing in the late 'seventies, with respect to the Gambia, said that

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<sup>16</sup> A. Werker (dir.), *The adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1939); N. Shute, *So disdained* (1928; London, 1966), pp.23-5, 36; J. B. Priestley, *Angel pavement* (London, 1930), p.609; Christie, *The murder on the links* (1923; London, 1960); 'The disappearance of Mr. Davenheim', in Christie, *Poirot investigates* (1924; London, 1955), p.157; Christie, *The big four* (1927; London, 2002), p.7; Christie, *Why didn't they ask Evans?* (1934; Glasgow, 1956); *Murder in the mews* (1937; Glasgow, 1964), p.102; elsewhere Christie notes that it was not always plain-sailing to make money, but this was as a result of the depression, rather than anything deemed intrinsic to South America itself; Christie, *The ABC Murders* (1936; London, 2002), p.9

<sup>17</sup> E. Forde (dir.), *Charlie Chan in London* (1934); L. Seiler (dir.), *Charlie Chan in Paris* (1935); W. Nigh, *Mr. Wong, detective* (1938); Nigh (dir.), *Mr. Wong in Chinatown* (1939); Nigh (dir.), *The mystery of Mr. Wong* (1939); E. Bramah, *Kai Lung's golden hours* (1922; London, 1938), *passim*; see also R. Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, culture and colonialism 1900-1949* (Manchester, 1999), pp.22-60

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim*; R. Boleslawski (dir.), *The garden of Allah* (1936)

<sup>19</sup> It was even possible in fiction for close relationships to be forged between an Englishman and someone from a non-African region, even if that Mexican or Paraguayan nevertheless remained inferior; Vahey, 'The word of an Englishman', pp.195-205

<sup>20</sup> Elliott, 'Reminiscences, RHO Mss.Afr.s.1838, pp.1-2, 28

<sup>21</sup> T. Benn, *Dare to be a Daniel: Then and now* (London, 2004), p.9. Such sentiments were not confined solely to those men who worked as officials; H. L. Haylett, 'An account of my two tours as office assistant in the Secretariat, Zanzibar 1935-1942', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1946/(1)/20; see also Bridges, 'So we used to do', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1881/6; M. Strobel, *European women and the second British Empire* (Bloomington, 1991); N. Chaudhuri and Strobel (eds.), *Western women and imperialism: Complicity and resistance*, (Bloomington, 1992); E. Maslen, *Political and social issues in British women's fiction, 1928-1968* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.112

We did our best, and [the roads and bridges built] carried the traffic and trade rolled across them to the advantage of the local tribes... We are now forgotten and unwanted, but at least we did our bit, and left our mark.<sup>22</sup>

They wanted this perceived lack of attention, or negative attention, reversed. For one official in Nigeria, where 'progressive' opinion had taught the empire was 'shameful', a 'fresh evaluation is overdue'.<sup>23</sup> Others wrote in even stronger terms of the manner in which the 1945 Labour government and 'misguided and ill-informed busybodies' had acted to undermine 'the patient work over half a century of the dedicated and often self-sacrificing officers'.<sup>24</sup> A regret at the path the world had taken after the Second World War lingered in the minds of the ex-officials long after they had left service. Subsequent postcolonial turbulence in Africa served to re-consolidate the concept of the Briton as a benevolent being in the minds of those already predisposed to think as much. Ex-colonial officials felt they had nothing to apologise for.

The postwar period has been one of much ambivalence. Deep-seated and unsettling questions now surround the validity of Britain's and the West's attempts to export its values, to mediate the conflicts of others and so on. This has had an effect on all aspects of society, permeating cultural representations of Britain and the wider world. It helps to explain why the traditionally conceived hero now jostles for bookshelf space with the flawed anti-hero.<sup>25</sup> In contrast, only a minority of interwar colonial officials exhibited this sense of uncertainty. Like the rest, these newly-graduated men often went out to Africa holding onto long-established wishes to change and to 'help' others. However, this minority also came, for a variety of reasons, to question the nature of the majority's relationship with Africa. They felt both empowered by the state that had put them in charge of vast areas of land, and

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<sup>22</sup> R. G. Syme, 'The wanderings of a misfit: Gold Coast and Gambia 1928-45', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1722/46

<sup>23</sup> Elliott, 'Reminiscences', RHO Mss.Afr.s.1838, pp.1-2

<sup>24</sup> Tripe, 'Anger in Africa', RHO Mss.Afr.s.868(4)

<sup>25</sup> With regards to Kingsley Amis, see D. Sandbrook, *Never had it so good: A history of Britain from Suez to The Beatles* (2005; London, 2006), p.156; K. Amis, *Lucky Jim* (1954; London, 2000)



disempowered by their own sense of moral uncertainty of the validity of this state's actions and motives.

The fact that such opinions belonged only to a minority opposes what the majority of postcolonialists have argued. Ann Laura Stoler has written that colonial cultures were never 'direct translations of European society planted in the colonies', going as far as to suggest that officials were 'occupied with social and political concerns that often pitted them against policy makers in the metropole as much as against the colonized'.<sup>26</sup> While officials sometimes complained that enough resources were not being provided to enable them to do the jobs to the fullest, their approach bore more in common with the metropolitan commentators than not. The reason for the racial and imperial confidence and the surety with which colonial officials expounded developmental aims lay in the sustained intellectual debt they owed to the metropole.

As already noted, Peter Hallward is one of the few academics to have explicitly refuted postcolonialist ideas, with his claim that what is 'remarkable is that postcolonial theory should so often have argued that the colonial relationship is especially 'ambivalent and symbiotic' rather than minimally or trivially so'.<sup>27</sup> However, Hallward goes on to say that this minimal and trivial ambivalence is derived from the fact that he sees 'the specifically colonial relation as an emphatically divisive and exploitative one', and that colonialism was due to conquest, massacre, and cultural repression.<sup>28</sup> Repression and the like were undoubtedly a key part of the process of how Britain was able to take colonies, and while the continued threat, and sporadic use, of force is a key factor in explaining the perpetuation of the imperial programme, these do not account for the lack of ambiguity that the British interwar colonial officials felt. Instead, this lack of ambiguity was derived from the belief that Britain was working in harmony with Africa and the African. After all, irrespective of actual colonial violence, after 1918 officials usually viewed the use of force as anomalous or temporary, if nevertheless occasionally necessary.

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<sup>26</sup> A. L. Stoler, *Carnal knowledge and imperial power: Race and the intimate in colonial rule* (Berkeley, CA, 2002), p.24

<sup>27</sup> Hallward, *Absolutely postcolonial*, p.xv, see also p.xiv, xvi

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p.xv

It could be argued that colonial officials were implicitly bound to be the Britons who were the most vigorous in wanting to effect change in Africa. After all, they were the ones who had gone to live and work there. However, British interwar colonial officials were merely realising the wishes of the many who never left their comfortable homes for the unknown. The interwar upper-middle-class faith in what the empire could do for both the 'poor' native and for Britain was persistent. Those who did leave for Africa firmly remained a part of the class from which they were drawn. They were simply the most willing and socially able, by dint of their youth and their eagerness, to see the world and do the work of the colonial official. Their eagerness for this work was borne of the ideas that there was a battle between 'civility' and the 'primitive' that they could involve themselves with. Though such matters were obviously not as significant to the majority as raising families, generating income and the like, those that stayed at home were armchair colonial officials.

Of the majority view among officials, one academic has written that

British loathing for Sudanese merchants and landlords, their disdain for "traditional" authorities, and their fears of "petty autocrats" and "half-educated natives" suggest that any Sudanese whose status was more exalted than that of a peasant constituted an implicit threat to the colonial order in which wealth and power were to be British prerogatives.<sup>29</sup>

Most of this is patently untrue. The British did not dislike merchants and landlords when it was felt that they were bringing the Sudanese more fully into a capitalist economy. Neither did they 'fear' the 'half-educated native' at this time. Instead, in the interwar period the 'native' was disliked, not because he had dared to lift himself above the position of peasant, but because it was felt that this elevation ran counter to carefully delineated concepts of what was racially acceptable. Race inscribed the way in which development was to occur, but did

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<sup>29</sup> V. Bernal, 'Colonial moral economy and the discipline of development: The Gezira scheme and modern Sudan', in *Cultural anthropology* 12 (1997), p.468

not foreclose the possibility of change *per se*. Furthermore, to say colonial officials disdained the traditional authorities is also inaccurate.

Some administrators took an approach to African customs similar to that of anthropologists. Those societal functions felt to be without utility were often recorded as things of interest, but did not require preservation in the world outside of a museum. Africa was a curio, whose past was to be dutifully recorded as any other culture, but whose change was no cause for sadness. The British believed in partial change as a means of allowing a racially-informed 'natural order of things' to emerge. Some wanted a colonial life away from urban areas, but this was not a rejection of such plans for change; rather the power and responsibility that came with living in a rural area was actually considered greater as a result of the physical distance from urban centres. Therefore, the allure of rural posts was based on the romantic perception of the chance to engage with Africa on a personal level. For the majority, be they 'urban' or 'rural' officials, the 'greater plan' remained the same. The path towards a reformed Africa was morally universalistic in nature. That officials with divergent social and intellectual attitudes ascribed to Lugardian ideas about indirect rule demonstrates the strength with which these attitudes were put forward. This, allied with a refutation of postcolonialist claims to ambiguity, represents the core thrust of the present study.

The best way of going beyond what has been written here would be to take a more explicit look at how the differences that existed on the ground, the 'reality' of the situation, added nuance to the overarching perceptions of colonial officials across Africa. If differences from colony to colony were the sole basis for comparison, we would run the risk of neglecting disparities in the way different parts of each individual country were experienced. Therefore such work, while rewarding, would need to be exhaustive. After all, as was suggested above, each judged those Africans they came into contact with on a more personalised basis than a delineation of a hegemonically, paternalistic and racist outlook might suggest. Until that study comes we are left with a picture of a consistently interventionist interwar mindset, overwritten by a racist paternalism that blended universalism and relativism. This surety would have undoubtedly have come undone eventually. African nationalist activity would

have taken care of that. In the end, however, the cracks were set in motion by events taking place away from Africa, by men making their own plans in far-away Rome and Berlin.

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- , *Greenmantle* (1916; Oxford, 1993)
- , *The island of sheep* (1936; Thirsk, 2001)
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- , *Appointment with death* (1938; London, 1992)
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M. Carné, *Le jour se leve* (1939)  
M. C. Cooper and E. B. Schoedsack, *King Kong* (1933)  
W. S. Dieterle, *The hunchback of Notre Dame* (1939)  
D. Fleischer, *Gulliver's travels* (1939)  
E. Forde, *Charlie Chan in London* (1934)  
C. M. Franklin, *The toll of the sea* (1922)  
W. Futter, *Africa speaks* (1930)  
A. Hitchcock, *The man who knew too much* (1934)  
-, *The 39 steps* (1935)  
-, *The lady vanishes* (1938)  
A. Korda, *The four feathers* (1939)  
F. Lloyd, *A tale of two cities* (1917)  
W. Nigh, *Mr. Wong, detective* (1938)  
-, *Mr. Wong in Chinatown* (1939)  
-, *The mystery of Mr. Wong* (1939)  
J. Renoir, *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1932)  
-, *La grande illusion* (1937)  
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